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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, December 27, 2005 ★★ 4 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 19 P18

World's grief returns a year after tsunami

BANDA ACEH, INDONESIA—THE WORLD'S grief and compassion returned to the Indian Ocean's tsunami-battered shores on Monday, marking a year since giant waves crashed ashore in a dozen countries, laying waste to communities and sweeping away an estimated 223,000 lives.

Beside gentle seas that belied the Dec. 26 fury last year, survivors, friends and relatives commemorated the lost lives and destruction from one of the worst natural disasters in memory. World leaders sent condolences.

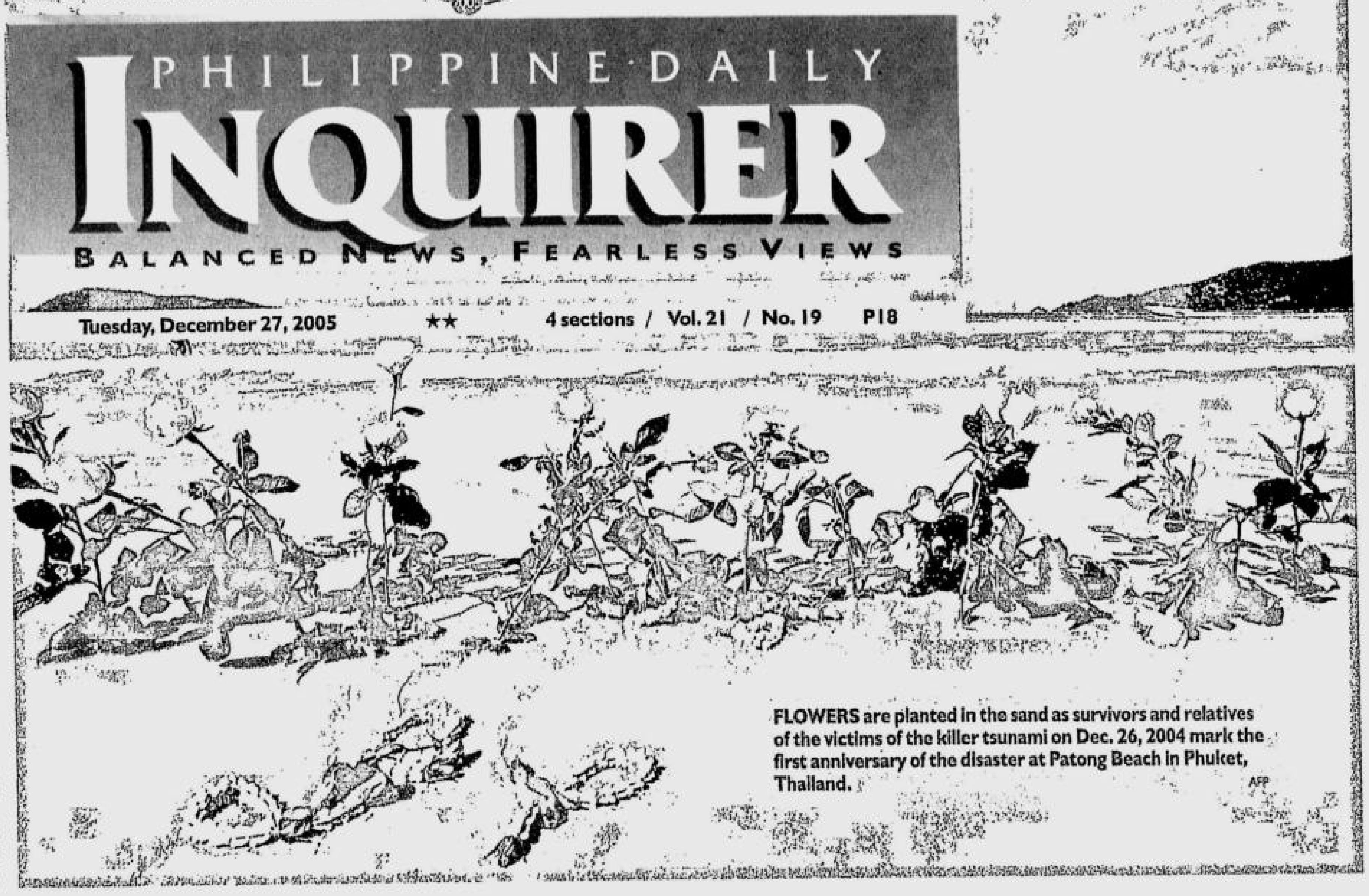
In Aceh province on Sumatra island, the closest land to the magnitude 9 quake that spawned the waves, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono sounded a tsunami warning siren to start a minute's silence at 8:16 a.m. (0116 GMT)—the moment the first wave struck. Aceh suffered more than 131,000 deaths.

"It was under the same blue sky, exactly one year ago that Mother Earth unleashed her most destructive power upon us," Yudhoyono said.

"The assault began with a massive earthquake but ... that was only a prelude to the horrific catastrophe to come."

Similar moments of silence were observed in Thailand and Sri Lanka, where President

WORLD'S/A4



FLOWERS are planted in the sand as survivors and relatives of the victims of the killer tsunami on Dec. 26, 2004 mark the first anniversary of the disaster at Patong Beach in Phuket, Thailand. AFP

Senators say GMA woes far from over

Doubt predictions of political stability, economic recovery

By TJ Burgonio

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo may have survived her worst political crisis, but she has yet to hurdle the tough task of putting to rest questions about her legitimacy, senators said yesterday.

"It's hard to say whether the political and economic situation will improve next year. But the greatest question is, will she be able to establish her credibility and legitimacy?" independent Sen. Rodolfo Biazon said in an interview.

"The political stability and economic recovery will depend on that."

Biazon, along with Senate President Franklin Drilon and Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, broke away from Ms Arroyo and joined former President Corazon Aquino, the academe, and business groups in calling for her resignation in July.

Biazon said former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano's reappearance after five months on the run and subsequent testimony on allegations that he and Ms Arroyo conspired to rig last year's elections hardly put the controversy to rest.

"It's an unfinished business," he said of Garcillano's testimony this month before a House inquiry into the vote fraud charges which, according to the opposition, stemmed from wiretapped phone conversations between Garcillano and Ms Arroyo.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. agreed. "Garcillano's testimony is worthless as far as the truth is concerned," he said.

SENATORS/A6

Survivors remember waves, lost loved ones

(EDITOR'S Note: Survivors of the tsunami that swept the Indian Ocean's rim a year ago recount the horrific moment when the waves crashed to shore.)

Beginning anew

BANDA ACEH, INDONESIA—Muhammad Yani clung to the second floor of a mosque and watched as the wave full of people and rubbish rolled past him.

"I was not afraid at the time," says Yani, 35, who later learned that his parents and a younger brother died in the tragedy Dec. 26, 2004. "I was more aware than ever that my soul belonged to Allah."

Minutes later, he was ripped from the mosque and transported 4 km away, where the waves spat him out.

Yani was found by a local aid worker, who asked what he could do to help.

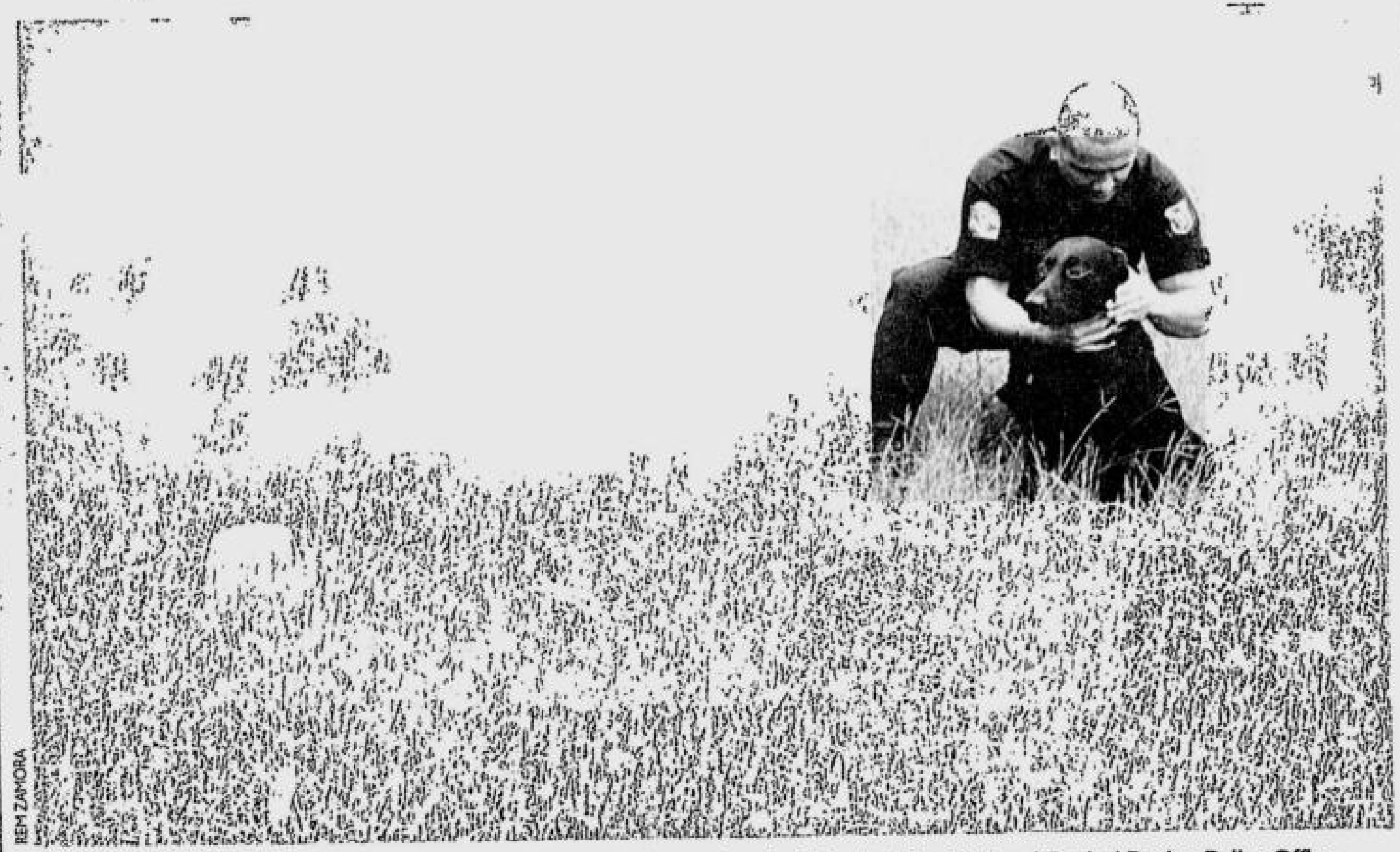
"I said, 'I don't want money, I want things to help me rebuild my life'," Yani says, accepting a donation of salt, a cool box, and a wheel barrow.

He used the materials to buy, transport and dry fish, which he now sells in the market.

"If people gave me money I would have spent it on handphones and shirts," Yani says.

SURVIVORS/A4

Cops unleash new breed of antiterror experts



REM ZAMORA

A CROSS-BRED dog undergoes training on sniffing explosives under the K9 unit of the National Capital Region Police Office.

By Luige A. del Puerto

WHILE ON FOOT PATROL IN A Metro Manila shopping center in December last year, PO1 Manny Viloria spotted a suspicious-looking canister near the complex's main power switch.

Following protocol, Viloria called in the mall's K9 unit. Princess, a Golden Retriever, was brought in. She started sniffing the canister and after a few seconds, sat down—a sure sign that she had smelled a bomb.

Explosives experts removed the improvised explosive device (IED) and detonated it away from the mall.

It's just another day in the life of a sniffer dog, a canine especially trained to locate illicit drugs or explosives by using his sense of smell.

In a world where terrorist attacks have become part of life, man's best friend has become an invaluable police ally.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Philippines used to import working dogs, like the Belgian Malinois, German Shepherd and the Labrador from the United States to be used as sniffer dogs. Not anymore.

COPS/A5

Archdiocese letter upsets activist priest

By Christian V. Esguerra

WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS—AS the "running priest" is finding out.

After being "reshuffled" off his parish in Project 4, Quezon City, Fr. Robert Reyes has received what he perceives as a reprimand from Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales.

The reason? His supposed concelebration of a Mass with a priest known for officiating at same-sex weddings.

The Mass was held last month in front of the US Embassy for the 22-year-old Filipino woman who was allegedly raped on Nov. 1 by US Marines in Subic, Zambales.

The Archdiocese of Manila, through Msgr. Roberto Canlas, its episcopal vicar and chancellor, called Reyes' attention in a letter after he was supposedly seen in the company of Fr. Richard Mickley.

"May we inform Your Reverence, in case you are not aware,

ARCHDIOCESE/A6

'Hawaiianos' or 'sacada'?

By Frank Cimatu
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

CABUGAO, ILOCOS SUR—THE problem is what to call them.

Preparations for the centennial of the arrival in Hawaii of Filipino workers are set to go full blast early next year. But a "word war" continues to rage among Ilocano leaders on the proper term for the forerunners of overseas Filipino workers.

Should they be called "*sacada*," "Hawaiianos," "*balikbayan*" or "landing"?

In December 1906, a group of Ilocanos arrived in Hawaii to work in the farms there. Forty years later, Filipinos would be the most dominant group in that American state.

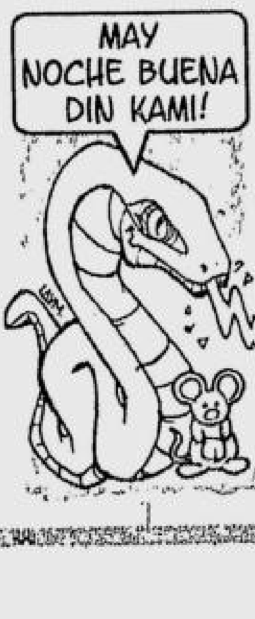
According to Ilocos Sur Vice Gov. Deogracias Savellano, who heads the Philippine commission here, 80 percent of Filipino farm workers in Hawaii are Ilocanos.

"Hawaiian sacada" has been the most common term for this group, Savellano said.

But historian Amado Naval contended that "sacada" was not an Ilocano word and should not be used.

Naval, secretary of the Cabugao municipal council and member of the defunct Ilocos Sur Historical Society (ISHS), said "sacada" was used for Filipino workers in Hawaii only after Prof. Ruben Alcantara of the University

HAWAIIANOS/A6



MAY NOCHE BUENA DIN KAMI!

A holiday reminder: Beware of snakes

By Blanche S. Rivera and Tina G. Santos

CAREFUL WITH THOSE CELEBRATING the season with you.

Snakes—pythons in particular—are expected to be out of their hiding places as they go after the rats that will go after your leftover holiday food.

The Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau yesterday said that snakes tended to come out of their natural habitats during Christmas—and much of the cold months

A HOLIDAY/A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern and Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will be cloudy with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. Widespread rains over Bicol, Mindoro, Palawan, Central Visayas and Northern Mindanao may trigger flashfloods and landslides. The rest of Luzon will be partly cloudy to cloudy with light passing showers.

COMPILED BY CYRIL L BONABENTE, PDI RESEARCH/12/27/05 SOURCE PAGASA

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Second FrontPage

Text us your feedback: inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Reds threaten to attack US troops

LUCENA CITY—DEPARTING FROM THEIR USUAL RELAtively open celebration, communist cadres and members of the New People's Army marked the 37th founding anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines yesterday amid tight security around guerrilla camps and vigilance against possible attacks.

They also aired a warning of possible assaults on American troops in the country and threatening attacks against the government.

In a statement, the Communist Party of the Philippines criticized the US military for increasing intervention in the Philippines and urged militants to take steps to deter the US from "further plundering" the country.

It called on its armed wing, the New People's Army, to "study and learn in advance how to inflict casualties on US military personnel" and said the rebels should look forward to "the glorious opportunity" of avenging the deaths of Filipinos killed during the 1898 to 1946 US occupation.

The rebels—which Washington has blacklisted as a terrorist group—have stepped up their attacks in recent months, killing several Filipino soldiers and wounding dozens more in land mine assaults.

There have been no known attacks on American soldiers.

US troops have been providing counterterrorism training, weapons and military equipment to Filipino troops battling suspected terrorists and insurgents since 2002, when US special forces allied with the Philippine military to rescue three Americans kidnapped by the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf Muslim extremist group in the southern Philippines.

Communist rebels have said Washington's counterterrorism training also intends to wipe them out. They have warned US troops to stay away from their rural strongholds.

But the rebels said they are on alert for attacks from the government.

"I can't just simply accommodate outside visitors, even journalists who want to cover our anniversary celebration. We have to observe strict security measures to guard against possible enemy attacks," communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said in a mobile phone interview.

He added that rebels knew that government forces would do everything to disrupt the celebrations, either through harassment or actual attacks.

"But we're ready for them," Rosal declared.

Both sides have traditionally declared a lull in fighting during the Christmas holidays to rest their troops and allow the only Christian nation in Southeast Asia to celebrate the season in peace.

But communist guerrillas this year disdained to declare a ceasefire, saying they saw no reason for the move. For its part, the Arroyo administration ordered a suspension of military offensives from Dec. 24 to 12 midnight of Dec. 25 and from Dec. 31 to 12 midnight of Jan. 1.

Yesterday, a senior police official said the insurgents were merely waging psychological warfare in inviting police and military offices to join up in ousting the administration.

"It's just psy-war; they do that every year to show that they are still around," said police spokesperson Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, as he laughed off the idea that police officers would actually be willing to ally themselves with communist rebels. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau, Luige A. del Puerto and AP*

Solcom chief: Purges haunt CPP-NPA

LUCENA CITY—A TOP MILITARY OFFICER said yesterday the "senseless" purges that killed hundreds of communist cadres suspected of being government spies would forever haunt officials of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its military arm, the New People's Army.

"Gregorio Rosal and the rest of the communist terrorist leaders cannot escape responsibility for the deaths of all the victims of their bloody and senseless purges," said Lt. Gen. Pedro Cabuay Jr., commander of the military's Southern Luzon Command based in Camp Nakar here.

Calling the incident a closed chapter smacks of callous insensitivity to the cries of justice victims' families wail, he added.

Cabuay challenged communist leaders "to be men enough" and disclose the real identities of members directly involved in the torture and murder of communist guerrillas suspected of being traitors.

"What exactly was the participation of Ka Roger (communist spokesperson Gregorio Rosal) and other members of the CPP/NPA, some of whom have become businessmen and politicians? They deserve to be brought to court and suffer the consequences of their criminal acts," the Solcom chief said.

Cabuay said he wondered what punishment Rosal received.

"Did the Party give him some spanking or were his fingers merely slapped with a pencil in contrast to what they did to their comrades who were hanged on their feet without sufficient food for weeks and tortured to death on mere suspicion as government deep penetration agents?" Cabuay asked.

Rosal apparently unperturbed by the accusation, said the communist anti-infiltration campaign mounted in the past was always resurrected by their enemies, especially during this time of the year. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Give Yap a chance, critics told

By Michael Lim Ubac

'TIS THE SEASON FOR FORGIVENESS, SO newly appointed presidential adviser for job creation Arthur Yap should be given "a second chance," administration and opposition lawmakers said yesterday.

Administration Rep. Benasing Macarambon, chair of the House committee on agriculture, said Yap deserved another chance to serve the Arroyo administration since "he could have done more had he not resigned as agriculture secretary out of delicadeza because of a tax case that was later on dismissed for lack of merit."

"All these criticisms are meant to block his appointment. Secretary Yap deserves to be again part of government because of his proven competence, integrity and honesty," said Macarambon.

Other House officials—Majority Leader Prospero Nograles, Deputy Majority Leader Fred Castro, and Isabela Rep. Edwin Uy, chair of the committee on bases conversion and development, and Deputy Minority Leader Rolex Suplico—supported President Arroyo's new appointee.

They branded as "premature and baseless" criticisms against Yap's designation based on a "non-existent" Agusan development project. They even expressed confidence in Yap's ability, saying he had "performed well" during his stint at the Department of Agriculture.

In a text message, Suplico said it was "premature" to criticize the appointment of Yap whom critics consider a "suspect" based on a project that never materialized—the P8.9 billion Agusan Reserve Area Development Project.

"I know Atty. Yap as an honest and dedicated public servant. Let him work first and criticize him thereafter if he cannot deliver, based on his job description," said Suplico.

Uy said he did not expect that a low-level appointment such as the presidential adviser for job creation would draw flak from a member of Congress like Akbayan

Rep. Etta Rosales had said it was illegal for the government to fund the project using the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses which, according to the law, should all go to the comprehensive agrarian reform program.

The Senate investigated the Agusan project but terminated the probe after "finding no proof" at all that Yap was involved in the project, said Uy.

Panganiban: No talk, no mistake

By Armand N. Nocum

NEWLY-APPOINTED CHIEF JUSTICE ARTEMIO Panganiban plans to make the Philippine Supreme Court—long considered an impenetrable fortress—more accessible to media and the public.

But Panganiban, a former newsboy who later became president of the INQUIRER, is aware of the dangers of breaking the court's long history of silence.

"I may be misquoted [or] quoted out of context... it's always dangerous to go public," said Panganiban, adding that his decision to be more open would depend on how media would use its freedom.

It was former Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. who, upon his assumption in 1998, opened a peephole for media by creating the Supreme Court press information office under lawyer Ismael Khan Jr.

The initiative was part of Davide's judicial reform program.

However, the former chief justice left most of the talking to Khan. Davide said little during the times he allowed media to interview him.

It was actually Panganiban, then head of the court's public information committee, who was a bit more open.

But this time, Panganiban said he would hold more press briefings.

This would be a "delicate balancing act," the chief justice said, meaning he would have to be careful about his pronouncements lest he be accused of misjudging a case.

He said he would be open not only to media, but to people in general, with the chief justice doing most of the listening to gripes or complaints.

Talking about cases either to the media or the public is a no-no.

"Friends will tell you they cannot whisper to me about cases pending in court or in my sala. I simply refuse to listen to them," Panganiban said.

As the "leader of the third branch of government, I have to relate to people, but [this] must be tempered by my role as a magistrate," he said.

"The court welcomes the support of media to enable it to reach the people," he said, adding that this would bring about a "public appreciation for the judiciary or the rule of law."

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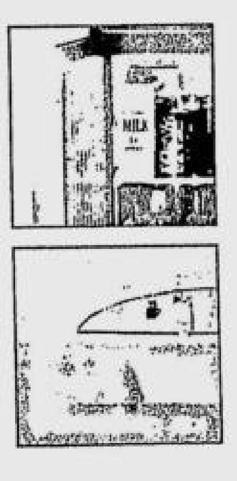

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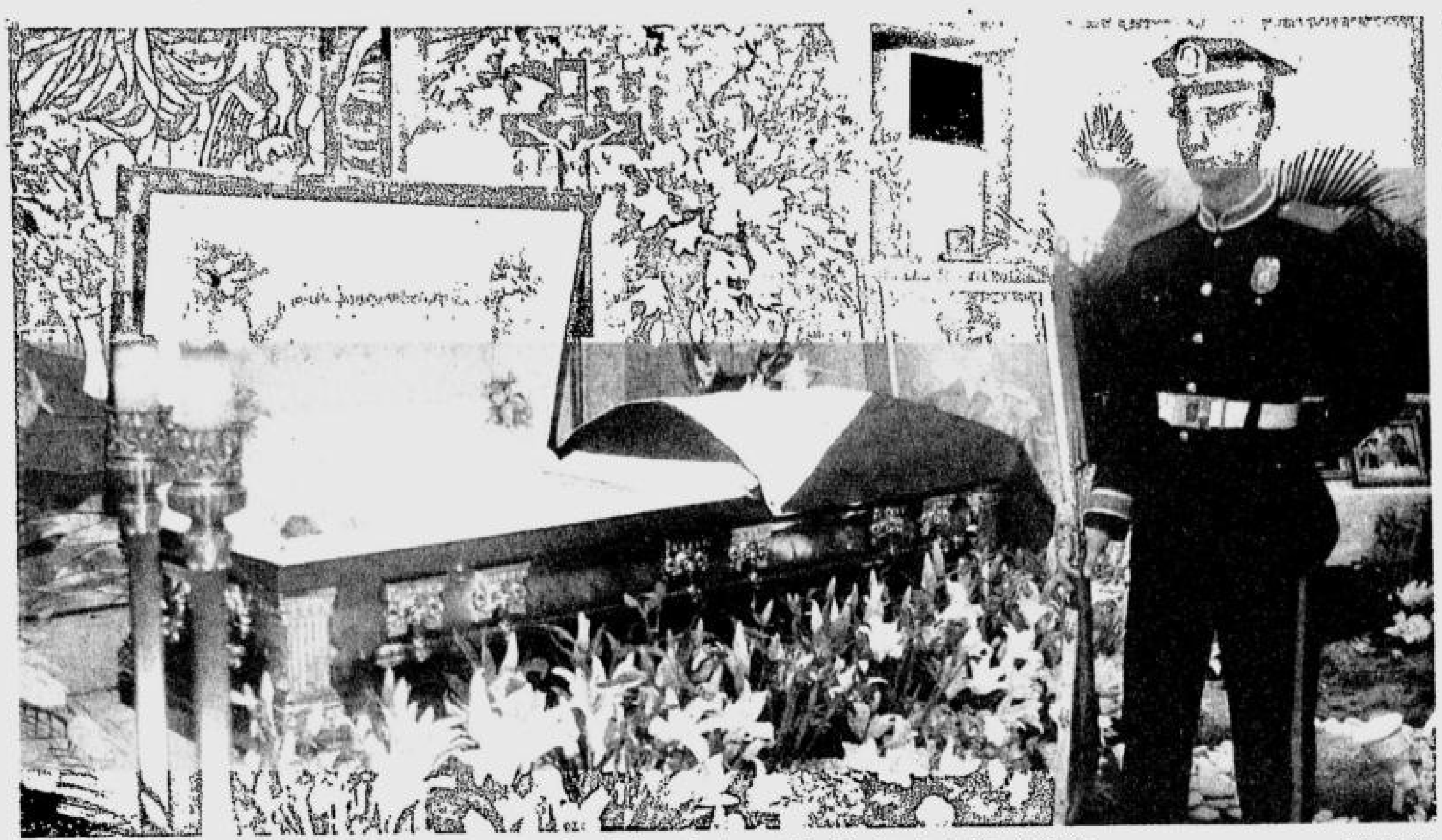

A MARINE soldier guards the coffin of the late former Sen. Robert Barbers at the Santuario de San Antonio. RAFFY LERMA

GMA offers 'Libingan' burial for ex-senator

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS OFfered the Libingan ng mga Bayani as the final resting place for the late Sen. Robert Z. Barbers. His family, however, has yet to decide whether to accept the offer.

The President made the offer when she paid her last respects to Barbers, one of her former allies in Congress, at the Santuario de San Antonio in Makati City early Sunday night, his family said.

"We're grateful that there was such an offer. He's a *bayani* (hero) for us, his supporters, colleagues and his constituency. But the family is still thinking about it," the senator's son, Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers, said in an interview.

Before the offer came, the family thought of burying the late senator at the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque City, where most of their dead relatives are buried. The burial is set for Jan. 4.

His body will be flown to the family's residence in Surigao City on Friday. This will be flown back to Manila on Monday next week and will be brought straight to the headquarters of the Western Police District, according to his son, Ace Barbers.

After an overnight stay at the WPD, the body will be brought on Tuesday back to the Santuario de San Antonio. The next day, this will be brought to the Senate for the necrological services before it's finally laid to rest at high noon.

Lawmakers, government officials, police officers and men, and civilians continued to stream into the Santuario to pay their last respects to the man who made crime-fighting his advocacy as a law enforcer, a Cabinet official and later on as a legislator.

Among them were Sen. Alfredo Lim, Barbers' former superior at the WPD; former Sen. Francisco "Kit" Tatad, presidential adviser Gabriel Claudio, and former Ombudsman Aniano Desierto.

Barbers' dark brown coffin, draped with the Philippine flag and guarded round the clock by Marine officers, stood at the far end of the chapel, surrounded by flowers in bloom. It's flanked on the right by a huge picture of the former senator delivering a speech and on the left a priest's table on which stood a Sto. Nino clad in a police uniform.

Barbers' biggest regret: Antiterror bill's nonpassage

By TJ Burgonio

PERHAPS NEXT TO LOSING HIS reelection bid in May last year, the late Sen. Robert Z. Barbers' biggest frustration as a lawmaker was the nonpassage of his antiterror bill during his term.

"That's his frustration. He would have wanted it to become a law. He was so concerned about public order," said Xerxes Nitafan, secretary of the committee on public order and illegal drugs chaired by Barbers during the 12th Congress.

"In fact, after he lost in the elections, he made a request to lobby for its passage with the next chair of the committee on public order," Nitafan said.

The bill, which sought to root out terrorism by imposing stiff penalties on elements sowing terror, got stuck in the period of individual amendments and did not reach second reading due to some lawmakers' opposition, among other reasons.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. recalled that before the May 2004 elections, he discussed the possibility of introducing some "safeguards" to the bill with Barbers to protect the rights of the people.

"In fairness to him, he was very receptive to it," he said in an interview.

Barbers was elected senator in May 1998. He pushed for and succeeded in getting the Senate to make the committee on public order and illegal as one of the standing committees in 1999, which he eventually chaired, according to Nitafan.

He also served as chair of the influential Commission on Appointments' committee on local governments, and vice chair of the body's committees on national defense and foreign affairs.

The senator also served as vice chair of the Senate committees on justice, and national defense and security.

Crime fighter

But to his former colleagues and staff, Barbers will best be remembered for bringing his anticrime advocacy to Congress and crafting countless major pieces of legislation addressing crime and the drug menace.

Foremost among this was Republic Act 1965 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, which repealed the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1972 and sought to impose stiffer penalties for possession and peddling of illegal drugs.

"He was a law and order man. His legislation centered on combating the drug menace," Pimentel said.

Nitafan, 33, recalled that he once prepared a press release in which he dubbed Barbers as the father of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act, but the senator had this specific phrase stricken off.

"He said that this recognition should come from others," he said.

RP medical 'brain drain' worries envoy

EVEN A FOREIGN DIPLOMAT HAS AIRED apprehensions over the ongoing "drain" on the Philippine medical profession.

British Ambassador to Manila Peter Beckingham said "too many (Filipino) doctors retraining as nurses" are being lured by better pay in his home country, a trend that both Manila and London should "watch very carefully."

"One area we obviously need to keep a watch on, more for your government than for ours, is that there is a drain on your own health service. We are very aware of that," the diplomat told reporters in an interview last week.

It was a rare and probably the first time that a foreign official drew notice to the alarming migration of Filipino doctors and nurses, their scarcity worst felt in hospitals in the provinces and rural areas.

The diplomat reported that 2005 saw a 15-percent increase in the number of Filipinos applying for working visas in the UK.

Well over 120,000 Filipinos are now working in Britain, most of them in the health service while significant numbers are also in the fashion industry, financial sector, and the music business, he noted.

While saying that Filipino professionals in various fields are very welcome to work in the United Kingdom, he said the exodus of doctors preferring to be nurses could be "an issue in the long term, to be candid with you."

However, Beckingham expressed confidence that the country will not have a shortage of nurses.

The envoy said he actually sees an "oversupply" of nurses for local hiring, an impression he got from recent trips outside Metro Manila, including one he made to San Fernando, Pampanga, where one university "produces nurses by the thousands."

"I think we and your government will need to watch very carefully that there are too many doctors from the Philippines retraining as nurses to come into Britain," he said.

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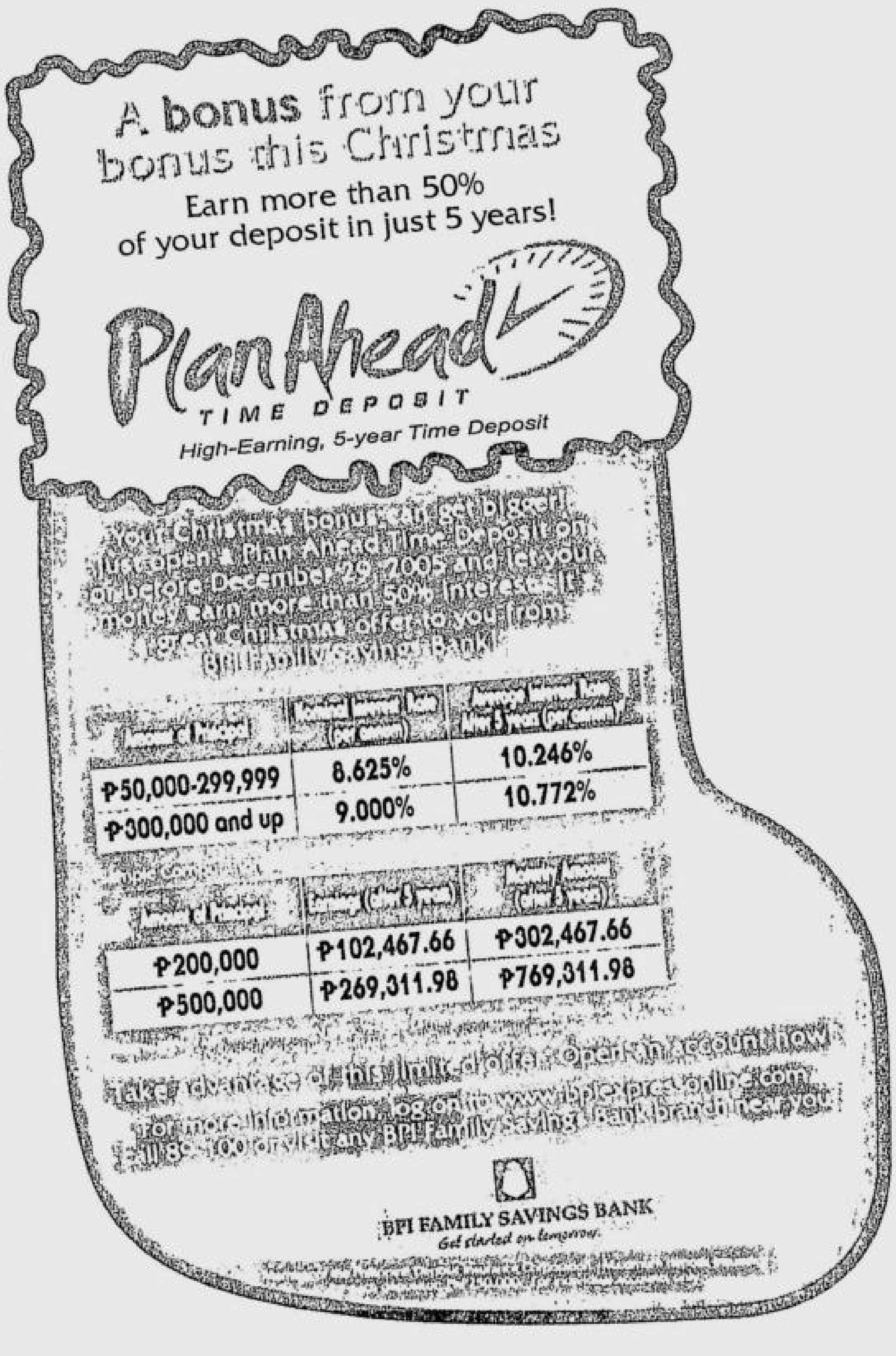

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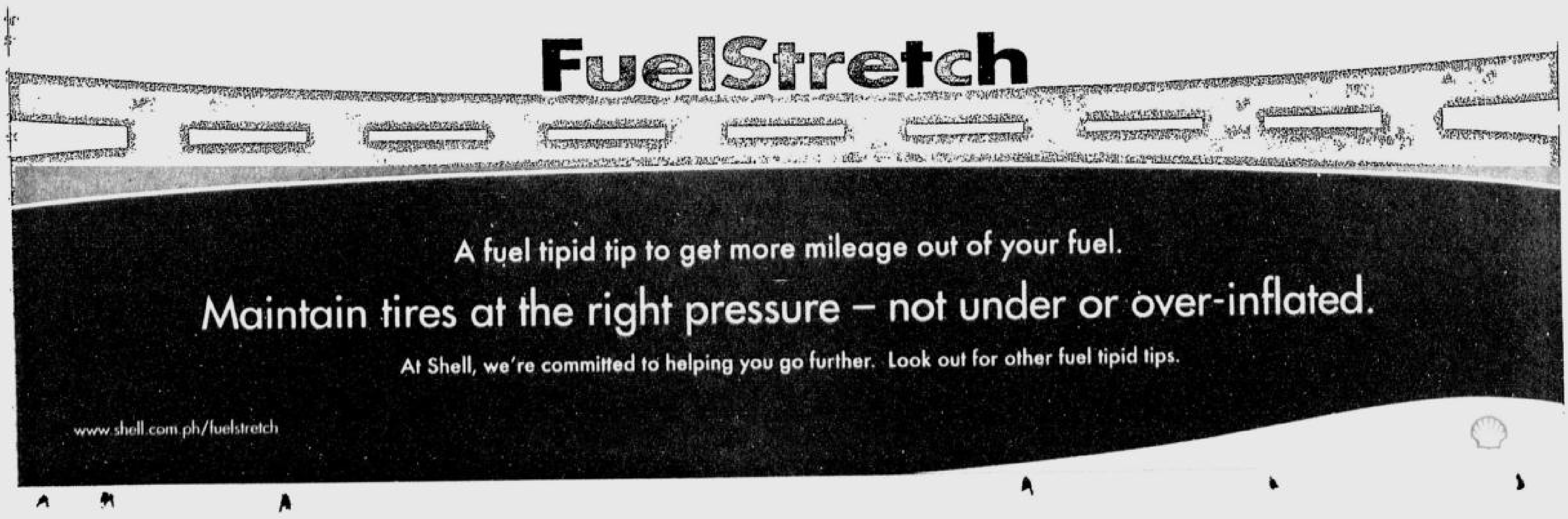

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World's grief returns ...

From page A1

Mahinda Rajapakse joined ceremonies near the site where the raging waves swept a passenger train from its tracks, killing nearly 2,000 people.

In India, thousands took part in interfaith prayers at an 18th century church, then marched to a burial ground for tsunami victims.

Last year's quake—the most powerful in 40 years—ruptured the sea floor off Sumatra, displacing billions of tons of water and sending 30-meter-high walls of water roaring across the Indian Ocean at jetliner speeds.

The impact was staggering. The tsunami swept away entire villages in Aceh and Sri Lanka, swamped five-star resorts in Thailand and surged into coastal communities from India to east Africa.

Personal reflection

But some of the survivors and relatives of those who died preferred more personal reflection.

On Thailand's Patong beach, one man sat weeping in the sand before a gently lapping sea, a bouquet of white roses in front of him. He declined to talk to a reporter.

He was among hundreds of Westerners who traveled to sites along Thailand's world famous beachfront where their loved ones died or disappeared.

"Somehow it's good to see this place," said Ulrika Landgren, 37, of Malmo, Sweden, tears streaming from behind her sunglasses as she visited the beach where nine family friends had died.

But some Thais shunned Monday's elaborate ceremonies, saying the rites were expensive, inappropriate events designed to attract tourists and showcase the government.

Led by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, scores of Thai officials were taking part in daylong commemorations in stricken areas along the southwestern Thai coast where the huge waves struck, leaving more than 8,200 Thais and foreigners dead or missing.

"The government is organizing a jolly celebration party, not a memorial service, not a peaceful merit-making. The government does not think of the hearts and minds of the people who lost their beloved ones," said Nantaya Saphanthong, a representative of the all-but-obliterated Ban Nam Khem village.

Nantaya said many in the fishing community were refusing to take part in government-organized activities at a nearby beach, and would instead hold their own quiet Buddhist service in the village.

The official events have all been subcontracted to GMM Grammy Public Company Ltd., a giant in the Thai entertainment sector with close business and personal ties to Thaksin's government.

Warning system

Indonesia for the first time tested its tsunami warning system in Sumatra on Monday—a chilling reminder that the island sits on one of the world's most unstable geological fault lines. Scores of powerful aftershocks have rumbled the region all year.

"We knew it was just a drill," said Candra Yohanes, 55, who was among those who fled to higher ground when the sirens rang out in Padang in West Sumatra province, which neighbors the region hardest-hit by last year's tsunami, Aceh.

"Still, when I heard the siren my heart was pounding so hard," she said. "I hope what happened in Aceh is never repeated here."

Dummy data from an earthquake sensor on the ocean floor triggered Monday's government-organized exercise.

Using the false report, the Meteorological Agency in Jakarta sent a warning to Padang's mayor, who ordered the emergency evacuation to start. About 2,000 residents—many of them women, and children dressed in school uniforms—fled to a predestined evacuation area on a hill. Ambulances and fire trucks followed.

The tsunami early warning system, which will be fully operational in two years, is still in its initial phase of operation, will consist of buoys, beach sirens and international communication lines.

By the end of 2007, about 160 seismographs would be installed in 10 regional stations across Indonesia. Each station would eventually be able to process earthquake data within five minutes of receiving it, and issue tsunami warnings direct to local communities without having to rely on the central Jakarta office.

Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka's southern village of Peraliya—where the raging waves swept a passenger train from its tracks—people from around the country and international diplomats joined President Rajapakse to honor Sri Lanka's more than 35,000 dead and missing, the second-highest count after Indonesia.

Butchers hung up their knives to show respect for life while Buddhist monks prepared to chant through the night.

Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian clergymen, representing Sri Lanka's four main religions, opened the ceremonies with prayers. A two-minute silence followed at 9:30 a.m. (0330 GMT)—the time the waves hit—and a temple bell rang nine times. Rajapakse placed flowers on a monument.

He recalled the generosity of foreign and domestic donors, but said Sri Lanka has failed to capitalize on the goodwill to rebuild and restore peace.

"Could we do justice to those who perished in the tsunami? Could we continue with the initial wave of determination to rise again?" Rajapakse said. "It is sad to say that both you and me are unable to provide a satisfactory answers to these questions." *AP*

Survivors remember waves...

From page A1

Sharing grief

KHAO LAK, THAILAND—WHEN the tsunami struck a year ago, Japan van Loenan was torn from his wife and clung to his son until the waves ripped them apart.

"It was like being in a washing machine and I was screaming because I lost my son," Loenan, 56, recalls on a beach near where tragedy struck.

After five desperate hours, Loenan was reunited with his family on a hillside above the beach, but he suffered major injuries.

Multiple fractures in his right leg required three surgeries over the past year and have left him walking with a crutch. Nevertheless, Loenan believes he is among the most fortunate survivors.

"We know that we were lucky," he says. "We only lost our luggage, money. But the people here, they lost everything—their relatives, jobs, homes, everything."

Loenan and his family made the decision to return for the anniversary almost immediately after the disaster, and they are certain it's the right thing to do.

In their homeland, the Netherlands, Loenan and his family have nobody to talk to about the tragedy, and Loenan says that's important.

But he also had mixed feelings about returning.

"We left and the Thais had to stay and (suffer)," Loenan says. "After one year we come here, rich people, to commemorate, and that's difficult."

Fisherman tales

KEECHENKUPPAM, India—E. Jayaraman is one of thousands of fisherman visiting mass graves that dot India's southern coastline early Monday.

They share stories about lost family and friends.

"I searched for my daughter for hours but never found her. I don't know where she was buried," he says, looking forlornly out to sea.

"The sea is like God to us. My wife will come later in the day and pray at the same site for peace to the soul of our daughter."

The fisherman lives in Nagapattinam, the district in India that was worst hit by the tsunami, accounting for 6,065 of the South Asian nation's more than 10,000 confirmed deaths.

In the village of Keechenkuppam, impromptu memorials got under way as dawn broke.

Thangaraj, a fisherman who uses one name, says he didn't know where his wife was buried. But, "it's my village, so I have joined others in mourning our losses," he says.

At the burial ground, villagers light a memorial flame and hung a banner that read: "Lost fruits, flame and leaves, but not the root—Hope."

Simmering frustration

LHOKNGA, INDONESIA—Juanar Ali lives in a government built hut that leaks when it rains and is crammed with other survivors. The 28-year-old has no job and is getting frustrated.

"You should see my place, it looks like chicken coop," he says. "All I do is sit around."

Ali, who lost his parents to the giant wave and still bears the scars from his battle to stay afloat, receives the equivalent of US$9 a month from the government, which he says lasts less than five days.

While others have jobs on construction sites, he despairs of ever finding work.

"All we can do is look on from the outside," he complains. "If you don't know the right people, it is difficult."

Starting over again

CINNAMON GARDEN, SRI Lanka—Just before dawn breaks, Arunmugam Shanthi tiptoes to the backyard of her makeshift wood-and-tin shelter on Sri Lanka's southern coast, where she has lived since her home was destroyed by the tsunami.

"Come back, please," she murmurs, looking at the grave of her 9-year-old daughter Sakuntala, marked only by a plastic cord tied to four stakes. A small plant sown earlier by Shanti has started to flower on the muddy earth.

She then turns to the twilight sky.

"At least one of you come back," she says, appealing to Hindu gods for the reincarnation of her 2-year-old daughter Chandrika, year-old son Sanduni or Sakuntala, who were swept into the sea.

Shanthi, 31, went to a state-run hospital in July to reverse the sterilization she underwent after Sanduni was born. But so far she has not conceived.

"I will wait for some time and if I am not pregnant again, I will kill myself," she said as her husband looked on. *AP*

Corrections

IN THE DEC. 25 issue, the caption of a photo accompanying the story—"Christmas trees reflect signs of the times"—on Page A5 misstated the location of the Eiffel Tower-like Christmas tree. The Christmas tree is found in the City of Candon—not the City of Vigan—in Ilocos Sur.

* * *

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a front-page story—"Ex-Senator Barbers dies"—misstated that former Sen. Robert Barbers once headed the National Bureau of Investigation. He once headed the NBI Police Special Task Force—not the entire bureau.

* * *

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Cops unleash new breed of antiterror experts

From page A1

In the grassy one-hectare compound inside a police camp in Taguig City, men armed with leashes and "tug-of-war" balls train the National Capital Region Police Office's (NCRPO) K9 unit.

The K9 team is composed of five bomb detection dogs or "dog officers." A dozen humans (staff members and handlers) and a veterinarian who monitors the dogs' health.

"These dogs are just as good as those trained abroad," according to K9 unit chief Senior Insp. Alfred Estudillo, a seasoned dog handler and explosives expert. "Some of our dogs here are crossbred. We thought they would be less capable. But they're just as good as the pure bred."

The dog officers are Bernard, 7, a Labrador; Queenie, 6, a German Shepherd (now retired because of walking difficulties); Kosovo, 2, a Belgian Malinois; and Rambo and Rainier, both 2-year-old dogs are a cross between a Belgian Malinois and a Labrador.

Top dog

During the recent Southeast Asian Games in Manila, the K9 unit was one of the busiest police teams, responding to calls almost daily, sniffing bags and packages where athletes and cheerers converged.

The dogs, no doubt, helped keep the SEA Games safe.

What does it take to be a bomb detection dog? How do you know if a dog has the potential to become one?

You give him a ball—preferably a tennis ball—when he is about 3 months old. If he aggressively goes after it, plays with it, and doesn't want to give it back, then you have a potential sniffer, according to Nick Tesoro, NCRPO's K9 unit team leader and dog handler.

A dog trained in bomb detection can cost up to P250,000 locally. The US Army maintains dogs that are valued at $11,000 (P586,641) each.

The dogs of the NCRPO's K9 unit are an excellent and disciplined lot, according to their handlers.

This reporter hid some TNT, a powerful explosive, behind the left, rear tire of a vehicle. One handler brought out Bernard, a Labrador to the car. Bernard circled and sniffed the car and in two minutes, found where the TNT was hidden.

Super smell

Dogs rely on their sense of smell in much the same way humans rely on their eyesight.

According to the nationalgeographic.com article "Dogs of war," the number of smell receptors in a human's nose ranges from 5 million to 15 million. In a dog, it can range from 125 million to 250 million.

The article quoted Donald Perrine, a veterinarian at Parkside Animal Medical Center in Fountain Hills, Arizona, who said the olfactory portion of a dog's brain is four times larger than a human's.

For this reason, canines can assist authorities in tracking and apprehending suspects, searching buildings for bombs, detecting narcotics and recovering evidence.

In the Philippines, sniffer dogs are a common sight in airports and sea ports, malls and shopping centers.

All in a day's play

For humans, bomb detection is serious work. But for dogs, it's all play.

Play is central to a bomb detection dog's morale, said Eugene Buelis, a dog trainer with the NCRPO's K9 unit.

"You always carry a ball with you. When the dog achieves something, you show him the ball and let him play with it. If you don't, he gets lazy and won't work as much," Buelis said. "Dogs like to play tug-of-war."

A bomb detection dog starts training when he is one-and-a-half years old. First, he goes through a basic obedience course, where he learns to "heel," "sit," "stay," "drop," and "come."

He also undergoes toilet training, learning to pee only in specific places and certain times.

After he "graduates" from the basic course, the "junior dog officer" moves to the advance bomb-sniffing course, where he is taught to detect explosives such as C4, TNT, dynamite, or black powder. He is also trained to detect ammonium nitrate, and a host of other bomb materials, such as power jell, blasting caps, ammunitions and fuses.

If he successfully detects the odor, he is given a ball to play with—his reward.

Bonding

The "dog officer" is then trained to "sit" or "drop" whenever he smells a bomb. He does not play or touch the bomb as this could be fatal, both for the dog and his handler.

As much as possible a handler is assigned to the same dog during training so they could bond, according to Estudillo.

"The handler walks him, bathes him, grooms him, plays with him, and gets to know his moods, his peculiarities," he said.

They usually end up working together in the K9 unit.

Bigger budget

The NCRPO's K9 unit gets a budget of P15,000 a month. Of this amount, P9,500 is spent for dog food, vitamins and dog shampoo for five dogs. The rest goes to the unit's logistical supplies.

About two months ago, Erika, a cross between a Labrador and a Belgian Malinois, gave birth to nine puppies. Erika has since died of intestinal problems, leaving the puppies motherless. The K9 unit's vet is doing his best to bring up the puppies. Unfortunately, one has died already.

The eight puppies are all potential bomb sniffers. One wonders if the K9 unit's budget of P9,500 a month is enough to feed and vaccinate eight puppies, as well as feed five hard-working "dog officers."

Although he did not explicitly express it, Estudillo would appreciate a bigger budget.

It's a small price to pay to raise what would hopefully be the next generation of healthy and hard-working dogs of the K9 unit—a highly specialized job that not even humans can fill.

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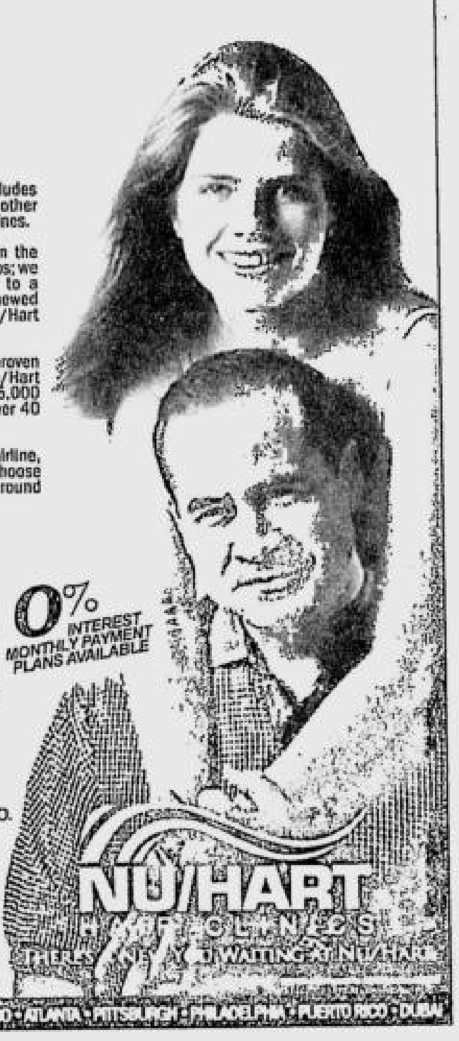

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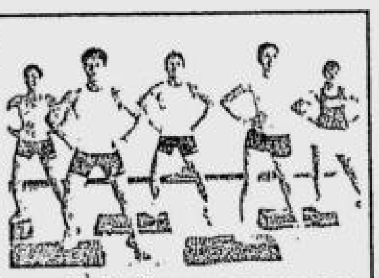

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Fugitive mutineer taps Internet in anti-GMA drive

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

MARINE CAPT. NICANOR FAELDON, the fugitive Oakwood mutineer, has started a civil disobedience campaign against President Macapagal-Arroyo through the Internet.

Faeldon, who escaped from military custody on Dec. 14, has put up a website (www.pilipino.org.ph) calling on Filipinos to "fight for … the right to the truth and the right to choose leaders."

"Arroyo will stay on unless we oust her thru civil disobedience. It is time to reassert our rights. It is time to reclaim our pride and dignity as Filipinos," a note in the website, called "Pilipino," said.

"If you have suggestions, please post them. If you have or are committing civil disobedience, please send us pictures so we can post them."

Faeldon, one of the six alleged core leaders of the July 27, 2003 Oakwood mutiny, slipped past his military guards after attending a hearing on their coup d'etat case before a Makati regional trial court.

A country in mourning

A picture of the Philippine flag flown at half-staff is shown on the homepage of the website.

In an introductory note, Faeldon said the flag was in that position "because the country is in mourning" after Ms Arroyo "robb(ed) us of whatever is left of our pride and dignity as a people," referring to allegations she cheated in the last elections.

The site contained a short profile and military background of Faeldon, who entered the service in 1989 as a trainee of the Philippine Navy's Naval Construction Brigade. It also had photos of the so-called Magdalo mutineers at the Oakwood Premier Ayala Center in Makati.

Faeldon recounted how he and five other supposed core leaders of the mutiny were kept in dark cells during their first 14 months of detention at the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) compound in Camp Aguinaldo.

"We stayed in darkness for the first 14 months, kept in cells within Isafp with walls so thick it would take two hours, when it rains, for the cold to penetrate. We saw the sun only when we went to court hearings, and when we had visitors," he wrote.

Inspiration from Mandela

While in detention, Faeldon said he grew roses, raised a dog, learned how to cook, and read "Walk to Freedom" by South African former president and Nobel Peace Prize winner Nelson Mandela.

"It humbled me to know that what we were going through was nothing to what Mandela had been through, and it inspired me to do more," he wrote.

The website's guestbook has received both support and criticisms from anonymous guests.

The Armed Forces has put top priority on Faeldon's capture, saying it has mobilized military and police forces to hunt him down.

Senators say GMA woes far from over

From page A1

Garcillano only added to the problems of Ms Arroyo, Pimentel said.

The wiretapping scandal prompted opposition lawmakers to file an impeachment complaint against Ms Arroyo. It was dismissed by the administration-dominated House of Representatives in September.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye on Sunday said that the President had survived the "most bruising political battle of her life" and even emerged stronger.

Additional VAT

Pimentel predicted that the political and economic situation would get worse with the impending implementation next year of the additional 2 percent to the 10 percent value-added tax on goods and services that took effect last month.

"With her tough talk that she wants to add 2 percent to the VAT, she's asking for trouble. The political and economic situation is not going to be any better," he said.

Finance officials had announced that the additional tax would be imposed starting Feb. 1, provided certain conditions, such as a marked improvement in the tax collection efficiency, were met.

Pimentel also twitted Bunye for claiming that Ms Arroyo restored the country's fiscal health and turned the economy around this year.

No turnaround seen

"There's no economic turnaround, no new investments and no expansion. Bunye is dreaming as usual," he said. "Just the same, if the Christmas season saw some consumer-oriented activities perk up, that's not because of Gloria. That's because of OFW remittances which peaked during the Christmas season." *(See related story in Business, Page B1.)*

Archbishop Oscar Cruz also said in an interview over the Church-run Radio Veritas that he saw no relief under Ms Arroyo. "If those governing us are still the same, if the administration is doing the same things," he said, "then next year won't be any different."

The Lingayen-Dagupan prelate said it was simply impossible for the country to move from a year of crises to a much better condition in the next.

"How I wish to say that next year would be peaceful and prosperous," he said in Filipino.

Protests next month

Carl Ala, spokesperson of the leftist Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, said the next six months would be decisive and would determine whether Ms Arroyo would be ousted.

He said the KMP and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan), the main force behind most of the protest actions this year, would again be at the forefront of the oust-Arroyo campaign next year.

Ala said the campaign would kick off with a huge demonstration in January in commemoration of the "Mendiola Massacre," when police fired at picketing farmers and killed 13 of them nearly two decades ago.

January 2006 is also the fifth anniversary of the Edsa II uprising that ousted President Joseph Estrada.

The group said toppling Ms Arroyo from power would be more difficult after the first half of 2006 because by then, the election fever for the 2007 balloting would have started to creep in.

In an email, the KMP spelled out the reasons why the first two quarters of next year would be favorable to the anti-Arroyo movement.

Season for change

"Historically speaking, ousting presidents in our country have occurred at the first quarter of the year," the KMP said.

The other reasons include Ms Arroyo's refusal to address the "Hello Garci" scandal, the fertilizer scam, her administration's threats to take over certain businesses, such as electric power distribution, and the alleged waning of support of traditional allies like former President Fidel V. Ramos.

The KMP also said the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines had a new and more assertive president.

It also cited the restiveness of the Armed Forces, as well as intensified attacks by the communist New People's Army as factors that could help bring down the Arroyo administration. *With reports from Christian V. Esguerra and Luige A. del Puerto*

'Hawaiianos' or 'sacada'?

From page A1

of Hawaii named them such in his book "Sakada: Filipino Adaptation in Hawaii."

In the opinion of Ilocano anthropologist Arnold Molina Azurin, the "sakada" used by Alcantara must have been based on writer-director Behn Cervantes' 1976 movie "Sakada," which is about sugarcane workers in Negros.

'Pukankeyn'

Naval said the Filipinos also labored in Hawaii's sugarcane fields. This was why they were also known as "pukankeyn"—a combination of the Ilocano word "*pukan*" (meaning "slash") and "cane."

Quoting Fr. Loreto Veloria, late adviser of the ISHS, Naval said the word "sakada" came from the Spanish word "*sakar*" (meaning "to cut").

But Savellano said "sakada" might be an Ilocano term.

He pointed out that it was a combination of the regular Ilocano phrase or group of words "*sakasakada amin*," which means "barefoot workers who earn for economic survival."

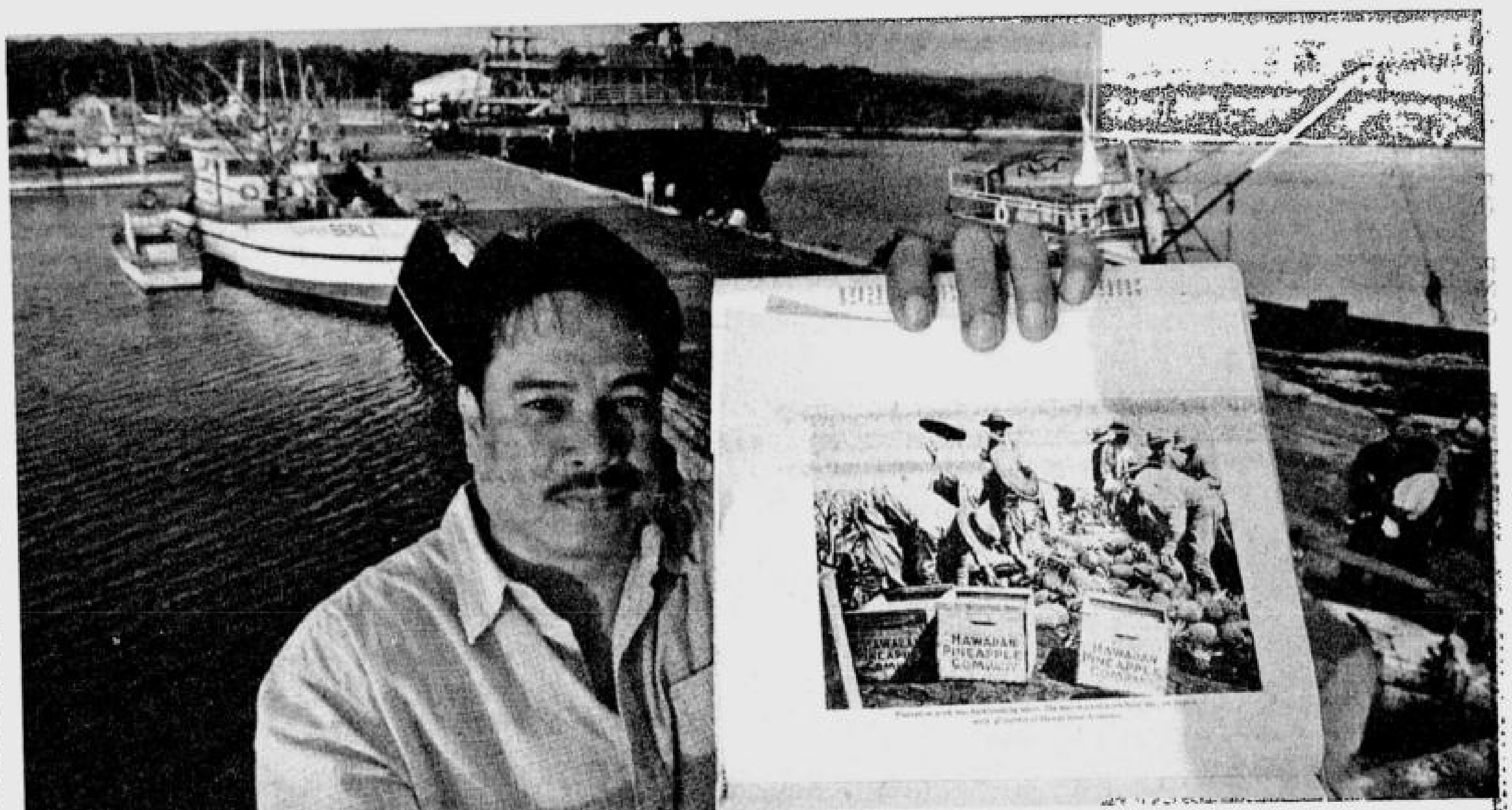
"The early 'sakada' [worked] in the vast sugar plantations, toiling against the harsh weather of Hawaii. They thought it would be their heaven, but found the place '*impiyerno*' (hell)," he said.

"But they never regretted [leaving their own country] at all," he added. "They left because of the slow pace of economic growth at that time. Later, other Ilocano laborers [strove to reach] Hawaii, where the early 'sakada' were then doing well economically."

'Landing'

Naval said he preferred the more generic "Hawaiianos" to refer to the early Filipino workers.

Both he and Savellano said another word that could be used was "landing."



ILOCOS Sur Vice Gov. Deogracias Savellano, the Philippine head of the Centennial of Filipino Sakadas in Hawaii, holds a Hawaiian book at Port Salomague in Cabugao, Ilocos Sur. Although the first laborers, mostly Ilocanos, were recruited in Manila, the large-scale recruiting was done in the 1940s at the port.

FRANK CIMATU/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

"Before they used the word 'balikbayan,' Ilocanos have been using 'landing' to refer to these Hawaiian immigrants and eventually all Ilocano immigrants in the US and other countries," Savellano said.

The centennial celebrations will start on the first week of January.

Hawaii Gov. Linda Lingle will travel to Manila, the Ilocos provinces and Cebu to meet the families of the original Hawaiian "sacada," "balikbayan" or "landing."

Archdiocese letter upsets activist priest

From page A1

of the activities of this Father Mickley who has been concelebrating with you," Canlas said in the letter dated Dec. 8, a copy of which was obtained by the INQUIRER.

Attached to the one-page letter was an article on Mickley and another one showing a picture of Reyes holding hands with a fair-skinned clergyman.

Mickley, who heads a religious society called the Order of St. Aelred, angered the Catholic Church for officiating at the wedding of two gay men in Baguio City in 2003.

He claimed then that he had performed marriage rites for 100 gays and lesbians in the Philippines in the last seven years.

'Slanderous'

Reyes, who will be out of the Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish effective Jan. 15, yesterday said that the Archdiocese of Manila got its details wrong.

He said he was with Fr. Archie Casey, and not the controversial Mickley.

"The letter is slanderous, if not libelous," he told the INQUIRER. "They're working on a bias that I do a lot of things without thinking."

The activist priest said he would write Rosales and seek an apology for insulting three priests, including himself.

Casey, a Scot and of the Xaverian Missionaries, is a volunteer in the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission of the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines.

He is also a member of the observation team of the Compact for Peaceful Elections' International Election Observation Mission in the Philippines.

Not a reprimand

But quoting Monsignor Canlas, Peachy Yamsuan, communications director of the archdiocese, clarified that Archbishop Rosales was merely acting on a number of complaints he had been receiving regarding Mickley.

She said the complaints were still being investigated.

Yamsuan said the articles attached to Canlas' letter to Reyes were supplied by a priest whose identity Manila church officials did not know.

"It was not a reprimand," she told the INQUIRER. "It was a very kind letter just to warn about the activities of Father Mickley."

According to Yamsuan, Rosales is not in a position to reprimand Reyes because the latter is under the jurisdiction of Cubao Bishop Honesto Ongtioco.

'Discriminatory'

Reyes, however, was offended by the letter.

He was particularly upset over Canlas' certainty that he was with Mickley, not Casey, during the Mass in front of the US Embassy.

And assuming that he had indeed concelebrated Mass with Mickley, abbot of the Order of St. Aelred, Reyes said the supposed reprimand was "discriminatory."

Reyes also smelled something fishy in the timing of the letter. He noted that it was dated Dec. 8, the same day Bishop Ongtioco announced at a Mass that he was on his way out of his parish.

"You see the connection?" Reyes said. "There seems to be a concerted effort to ease me out."

A holiday reminder: Beware of snakes

From page A1

—to follow their preys.

"The rats are out these days because of all the food. The presence of preys drives the snakes out to the city … You will see more [snakes] out there," PAWB Assistant Director Mundita Lim told the INQUIRER by phone yesterday.

Floods caused by heavy rains also disturb the natural habitats of the snakes, which are usually in creeks or dark places, forcing the reptiles out of their holes, Lim said.

The PAWB had 90 pythons brought to the Rescue Center as of latest count, about a third of which were taken to the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife in Quezon City the past six months.

In July alone, the PAWB received 11 snakes, 13 in August, and six this month.

Real estate push

Lim said disturbances due to real estate development had increasingly pushed snakes out of their natural habitats, exposing them to people who mistake them for dangerous reptiles.

Many of the pythons brought to the Rescue Center were suffering from head injuries or mouth rots because those who catch them tend to pound their head or pull out their teeth to ensure they would not bite.

"Do not hurt them. They are constrictors, they will not bite," Lim said.

She advised people who spot pythons to call the PAWB or Manila Zoo which could provide professional snake handlers to catch the snakes without hurting them.

The PAWB will relocate the remaining healthy snakes at the Rescue Center to a reptile sanctuary in Oriental Mindoro after rehabilitation.

Binondo python

Yesterday, a 10-foot reticulated python caused a commotion in Manila's Binondo District.

Raul Paragan, a security guard at a parking lot on Lavezares and Madrid Streets, said he found the python under a car at around 6 a.m, sending him as well as residents in the area into a panic.

With the help of barangay officials, Paragan managed to capture the snake and place it in a sack.

Some media men volunteered to take the snake to the Manila Zoo for safekeeping but it managed to sneak out of the sack, causing a commotion.

They later subdued the snake, but a photographer claimed he was nearly attacked by the reptile.

The unharmed python was later turned over to zoo representatives.

According to Dr. Romulo Bernardo, Manila Zoo administrator, the female python had to be be quarantined first to check if it was in good health.

They don't bite

Python is a common name for nonpoisonous snakes. Large and muscular, they kill their prey by squeezing until it suffocates.

Although most pythons feed on small mammals, some large species can kill and swallow small pigs and goats. They rarely kill people.

Pythons range from 1 to 10 m (3 to 33 ft) long and weigh up to 140 kg (300 lb), according to a website on the snake, www.manbir-online.com/snakes/python.htm.

The female python lays 15 to 100 eggs, and broods them until they hatch.

They are found in the tropical and subtropical regions of Africa, Asia, Australia and the Pacific islands.

"The reticulated python of Southeast Asia is among the largest snakes, reaching a length of 10 m (33 ft). Other well-known pythons are the Indian python, a favorite of snake handlers; African rock python; ball or royal python of equatorial Africa, which curls into a ball and can be rolled on the ground," said the website.

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Defensor: Denudation not to blame for Mindoro flood

By Norman Bordadora

ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY MICHAEL Defensor yesterday said the massive floods that hit Oriental Mindoro just before Christmas last week was the result of the unusual amount of rainfall in the province, not forest denudation.

Defensor made the announcement quoting the weather bureau Pagasa that there was a 308 percent increase in Calapan town's average rainfall for the middle of December. Calapan town was one of the heavily flooded areas caused by the heavy rains caused in part by the cold front.

"The likely reason for the excessive flooding was the unusual amount of rainfall on Oriental Mindoro and other parts of the country during the first half of December. As reported by Pagasa, Calapan town, which bore the brunt of the flooding, rainfall was measured at 415 mm," Defensor said.

"This is a 308 percent increase from 129 mm—the town's normal amount of rainfall," he added. And this fell in just two days, Pagasa said.

Defensor said the situation was aggravated by the breaching of a 230-meter section of the flood mitigation project, specifically the portion at Barangay Del Pilar, Naujan. The dike is about 5 meters wide and 3-4 meters high.

"It must be noted that the flood dike was constructed because of the recurrent floodings that the various low-lying areas in Naujan and Calapan have been experiencing in the past," Defensor said.

The secretary said that another very important observation of our geologists was the serious siltation of the lower reaches of the

Mag-asawang Tubig and the Bucayao Rivers.

"In fact, as a result of the siltation problem, the water channel have shifted from the Mag-asawang River in the '50s, westward to the Panggalalaan River in the '80s, to its current channelways along Bucayao and Catuiran Rivers," Defensor said.

Defensor said that since the watershed area is an estimated 38.4 square kilometers, a "catchment" for substantial amount of rain, "it is very important that these channelways be cleared."

"Rather than blindly pinpointing various causes of the flooding, as some sectors insistently charge without the benefit of adequate scientific basis," he said.

DEFENSOR

19,000 more NorthRail families to be relocated

By Cynthia D. Balana

ABOUT 19,500 MORE FAMILIES WILL BE DISplaced by the second phase of the clearing operations for the right-of-way of the $503-million, 32-kilometer North Luzon Railways Corp. (NorthRail) project in Pampanga early next month.

Vice President Noli de Castro, chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) which oversees the relocation of families affected by the project, said he was confident that he would be able to clear the way in Pampanga on schedule.

Last week, De Castro turned over to the North Luzon Railways Corp. (NLRC) the cleared 37-kilometer Philippine National Railways (PNR) right-of-way, stretching from Caloocan City to Malolos, Bulacan.

About 20,000 uprooted families have been relocated by the National Housing Authority (NHA).

The Vice President said the turnover would pave the way for the implementation of the North Rail Development Project from Caloocan City to Bulacan.

De Castro said it took the NHA almost a year to finish clearing operations on the Bulacan segment of project which he described as the "the longest (right-of-way) I have had to cover so far."

"This is an important accomplishment for the housing sector, just as this turnover is an important development for the NorthRail project," he said.

The big-ticket train project will run from Caloocan City through Malolos in Bulacan, Clark Field in Pampanga, Sison in Pangasinan all the way to San Fernando City in La Union.

About P20.5 billion of the P26.1-billion project cost will be funded through a sovereign loan from the Export-Import Bank of China while the remaining P5.6 billion will come from the North Luzon Railway Corp., the local counterpart of the China National Machinery and Equipment Corp. (CNMEC) which will construct the first phase of the train line.

The CNMEC will work on the first section of the project's phase one, which will run from Caloocan City to the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport in Clark Field.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, December 27, 2005
John, Apostle and Evangelist

1st Reading: 1 Jn 1:1-4
Gospel: John 20:1,2-8

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala ran to Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved. And she said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have laid him."

Peter then set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down and saw the linen cloths lying flat, but he did not enter.

Then Simon Peter came following him and entered the tomb; he, too, saw the linen cloths lying flat. The napkin, which had been around his head was not lying flat like the other linen cloths but lay rolled up in its place. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and believed.

Commentary

This is the disciple traditionally believed to be the beloved disciple. This is the preacher and lover of the Word made flesh, intimate with him, living like Jesus' shadow, closer to him than the other disciples and friends of Jesus. He saw with his own eyes and touched the Word of Life with his own hands! John was a witness, standing firm even as his word in court standing up for Jesus' truth exiled him until death away from his beloved community. So John became a writer so that those he loved would know perfect joy in the Word he passed onto them. Send a letter. Send words of joy. Shadow the Word in the Scriptures.

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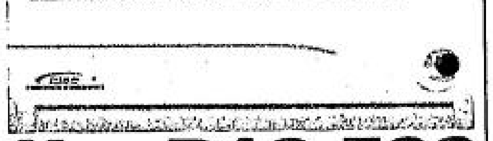

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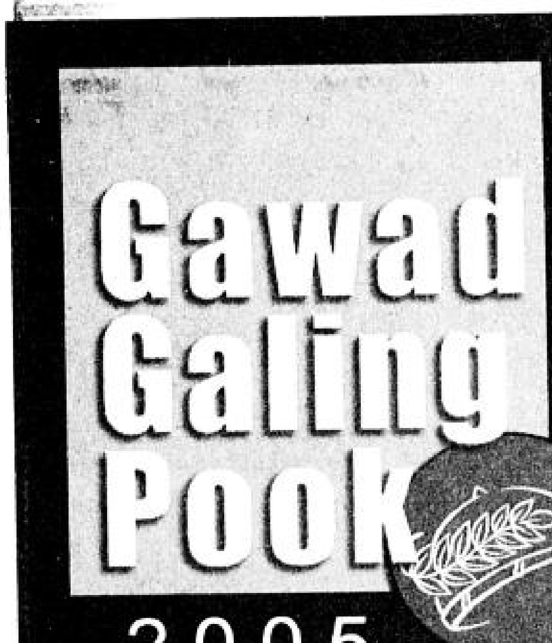


2005

A Tribute to Innovation and Excellence in Local Governance

"It is the joy of Galing Pook Foundation to discover these communities and make it known that patriotism abounds in our country ... Our challenge is to bring these cases of inspiration to a greater audience and consolidate these experiences so they become part of local government systems."
Dr. Milwida M. Guevara
Chairperson, Galing Pook Foundation

Top Ten Outstanding Programs

Joint Systems Improvement in Education Project
Bulacan Province

Coastal Resource Management Program
Dauin, Oriental Negros

Bicycle Friendly City
Marikina City

Misamis Occidental Aquamarine Development and Protection Program
Misamis Occidental Province

Gulayan at Palaisdaan Alay sa Kabataan
Oriental Negros Province

Molave Youth Home
Quezon City

Tuguegarao City Agricultural and Fishery Modernization Program
Tuguegarao City, Cagayan

Special Citation on Gender Responsive Governance
Program on Gender and Development of Capoocan
Capoocan, Leyte

Special Citation on Population, Health and Development Initiatives
Harnessing Synergy in Integrated Population, Health and Environment Programming
Concepcion, Iloilo

Special Citation on Child Rights Responsive Governance
Promoting Child Rights
Maitum, Sarangani

Trailblazing Programs

Bani Coastal Resource Management Program
Bani, Pangasinan

Calag-itan Marine Sanctuary & Seaweeds Production Livelihood Project
Brgy. Calag-itan, Hinunangan, Southern Leyte

Upland Central Economic Zone
Ligao City, Albay

Los Baños Ecological Solid Waste Management Program
Los Baños, Laguna

Diversified Organic Farming System
Magsaysay, Davao del Sur

Improving Local Government Income through Municipal Economic Enterprise and Development Office (MEEDO)
Naawan, Misamis Oriental

Effective Partnership Towards an AIDS Free Zamboanga City
Zamboanga City

Special Citation on Local Peace Building Initiatives
Bohol Poverty Reduction, Peace and Development Program
Bohol Province

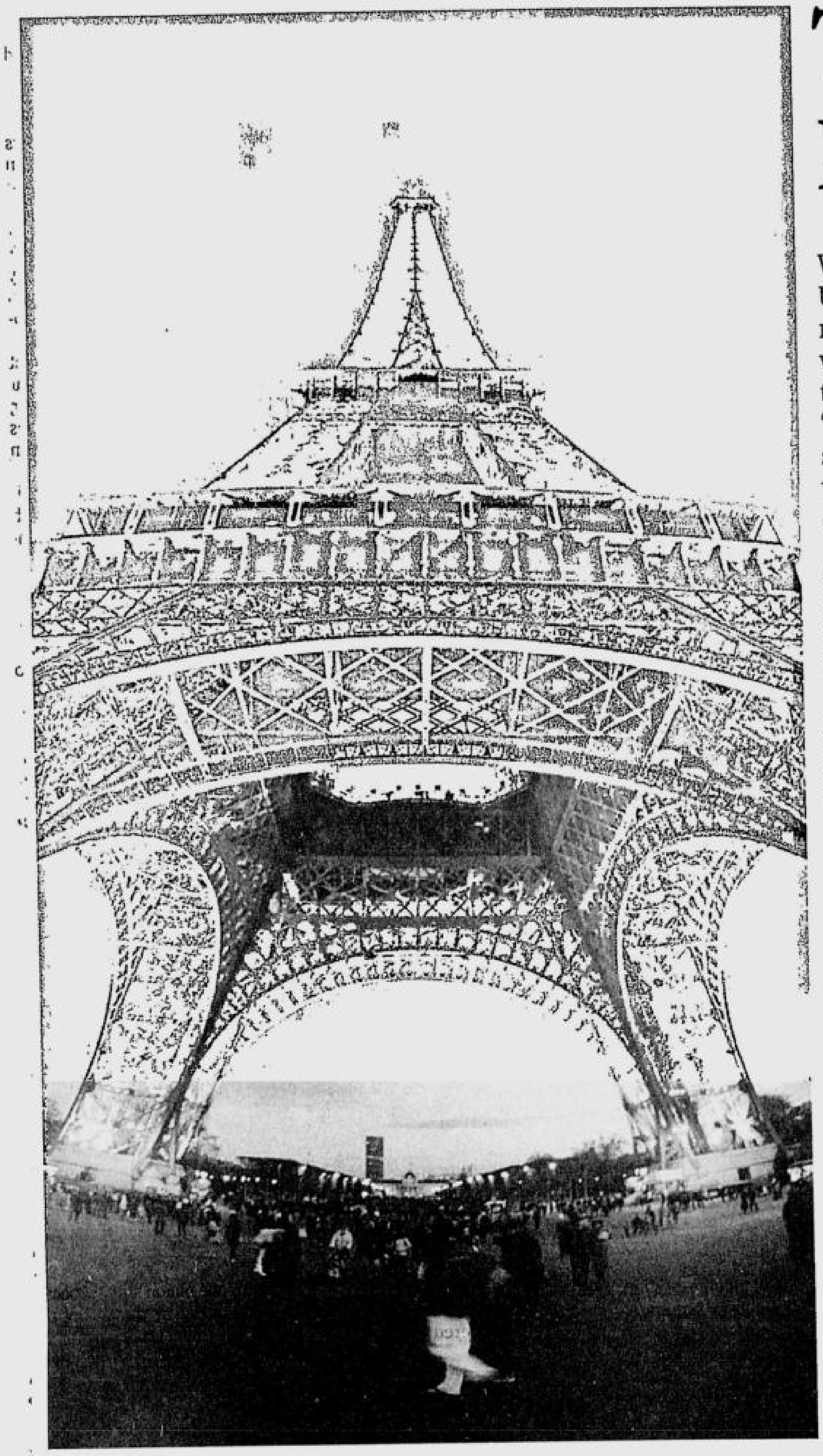
Special Citation on Local Peace Building Initiatives
Tungo sa Ugnayang LAYon ay Kapayapaan at Kaunlaran: Ang Karanasan ng Kabacan
Kabacan, North Cotabato

Special Citation on Productivity and Quality Responsive Governance
Goa ID System: An Identification System for an Improved and Efficient Delivery of Basic Services
Goa, Camarines Sur

Award for Continuing Excellence
Province of Bohol
Province of Oriental Negros

The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco



CHRISTMASTIME IN PARIS
The Eiffel tower illuminated on Christmas evening, Dec. 25 in Paris. AFP

Top commander admits Iraqis want US out ASAP

WASHINGTON—THE TOP US military commander admitted Sunday that Iraqis wanted US and other foreign troops to leave the country "as soon as possible," and said US troop levels in Iraq were now being re-assessed on a monthly basis.

The admission by Joint Chiefs of Staff Chair Marine General Peter Pace followed a decision by the Pentagon to reduce the current level of 160,000 soldiers in Iraq by two army brigades, which amounts to about 7,000 soldiers.

"Understandably, Iraqis themselves would prefer to have coalition forces leave their country as soon as possible," Pace said in a Christmas Day interview on Fox News Sunday. "They don't want us to leave tomorrow, but they do want us to leave as soon as possible."

Some US foreign policy experts have expressed concern that a new Iraqi government emerging from the Dec. 15 parliamentary elections could ask American troops to leave, but officials have dismissed that forecast as unrealistic.

However, an opinion survey conducted in Iraq in October and November by ABC News and a pool of other US and foreign media outlets showed that despite some improvements in security and living standards, US military operations in the country were increasingly unpopular.

Two-thirds of those polled said they opposed the presence of US and coalition forces in Iraq, up 14 points from a similar survey taken in February 2004.

Nearly 60 percent disapproved of the way the United States has operated in Iraq since the war began in March 2003, with most of those expressing "strong disapproval," the poll found.

When asked to suggest a timing for the US pullout, 26 percent said US and other coalition forces should "leave now," while 19 percent opted for a withdrawal after the Iraqis formed a new government based on the results on the Dec. 15 election.

Among those who support a delayed pullout, 31 percent said it should happen after security is fully restored, while 16 percent favored waiting until Iraqi security forces can operate independently, according to the survey.

Pace denied the US defense department had prepared a plan that calls for bringing the US troop level in Iraq below 100,000 by the end of next year.

But he said force requirements in Iraq are being regularly assessed by the top US military commander there, Gen. George Casey.

"They do a very, very thorough analysis, literally once a month, in great detail," Pace said. "They then determine how many troops they need to get the job done."

But the chairman warned that "the enemy has a vote" in how fast US troops were being drawn down, and if attacks intensified, "you could see troop levels go up a little bit to handle that problem."

Two US soldiers were killed in Baghdad on Christmas Day by roadside bombs, the military announced. *AFP*

Libya quashes death sentences of nurses

TRIPOLI—LIBYA'S SUPREME COURT on Sunday ordered a retrial for five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor sentenced to death for their alleged role in infecting hundreds of Libyan children with HIV.

The decision overturned death sentences that would have been carried out by firing squad and gave the nurses and their supporters new hopes that after seven years behind bars they could one day be released.

"The court has accepted the appeal of the Bulgarian nurses and ordered that a new trial will take place at the criminal court of Benghazi," the town in northern Libya where the infections took place, court President Ali al-Alus said.

Libyan Justice Minister Ali Hasnawi said the new trial would be held "in one month" and there would be "new judges."

The ruling had been postponed until Jan. 31 but Libya was keen to speed up the process as it bids to return to the international fold following leader Moamer Kadhafi's renouncement of weapons of mass destruction two years ago.

The move was quickly welcomed by Bulgaria, the United States and the Council of Europe.

"The unfair death sentences were reversed... We hope that the swiftness and the effectiveness demonstrated by the Libyan court in the past days will help to solve the case as soon as possible," Bulgarian President Georgy Parvanov said.

US state department spokesperson Justin Higgins said the international community had been working with Libya to find an "overall solution".

"We believe a way should be found to allow the medics to return to their home," he said.

In Strasbourg, Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis said: "I hope that the new trial will begin soon and that it will comply with the internationally recognized standards of fairness and due process."

The hearing Sunday on the admissibility of the nurses' appeal lasted barely an hour. The accused were not present in court.

The families of the children protested the decision outside the court, shouting: "This is injustice, this is injustice." They later took their protest to the center of Tripoli, brandishing pictures of their dead children.

The nurses stand accused of transfusing HIV-contaminated blood into 426 children at a Benghazi hospital on Libya's Mediterranean coast. Around 50 of them have since died of AIDS. *AFP*

Panel: Stem cells in Hwang's paper did not exist

SEOUL—PATIENT-SPECIFIC STEM CELLS that disgraced South Korean cloning expert Hwang Woo-Suk said he had produced this year do not exist, investigators have concluded, according to a news report Monday.

A panel at Seoul National University, which allowed DNA tests to be conducted to verify Hwang's research published in the US journal Science, said there was no evidence to support the existence of tailor-made stem cells, Yonhap news agency said.

"There were no such patient-specific stem cells as in the 2005 paper of Science," Yonhap said without naming its source, adding that the panel had been analyzing the DNA tests since Saturday.

University officials refused to confirm the news report, with one school official saying: "We have not reached a final conclusion. A briefing is due on Thursday."

The panel said it needed more time to complete the DNA analysis.

"Announcement on the analysis will unlikely take place this week. The investigation committee is expected to draw a final report next week," the panel said in a statement.

The panel said in an interim report last week that Hwang had doctored data and photographs of two stem cell lines to make it appear as though his team had cultivated 11 tailored stem cell lines, as suggested in the research paper.

It then shelved a conclusion on the veracity of the two stem cell lines, pending the outcome of DNA analysis by three other independent institutes.

Hwang has said he created tailor-made stem cells.

But the issue has cast doubt on the authenticity of Hwang's other work, including a 2004 research paper on producing the world's first cloned embryonic stem cell and Snuppy—an Afghan hound that the professor unveiled in August as the world's first cloned dog.

Stem cells are the body's master cells that experts believe can grow into any organ and thus someday can be used to help fight cancer and other diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and diabetes.

The panel quizzed Kim Seon-Jeong, a former key researcher on Hwang's team, on Sunday, as he has said he faked data for Hwang's 2005 paper on the orders of his then boss, according to Yonhap.

Seoul's MBC television network said earlier this month that the so-called patient-specific stem cells did not genetically match donor cells.

Hwang said he suspected that his tailored stem cells had been swapped and replaced with ordinary stem cells by Kim.

Kim has repeatedly denied Hwang's allegations. *AFP*

Playboy playmate gets boost from Bush in high court row

WASHINGTON—PLAYBOY PLAYmate Anna Nicole Smith has an unusual bedfellow in the Supreme Court fight over her late husband's fortune: the Bush administration.

The administration's top Supreme Court lawyer filed arguments on Smith's behalf and wants to take part when the case is argued before the justices.

The court will decide early next year whether to let the US solicitor general share time with Smith's attorney during the one hour argument on Feb. 28.

Smith, a television reality star and native Texan, plans to attend the court argument.

She is trying to collect millions of dollars from the estate of J. Howard Marshall II, the oil tycoon she married in 1994 when he was 89 and she was a 26-year-old topless dancer in Houston. Marshall died in 1995.

Like Marshall, President George W. Bush was a Texas oil man. Both attended Yale. Both held government positions in Washington.

There are differences. Marshall had a penchant for strippers and the court record before the justices is one of poverty, greed, sex, and family rivalry.

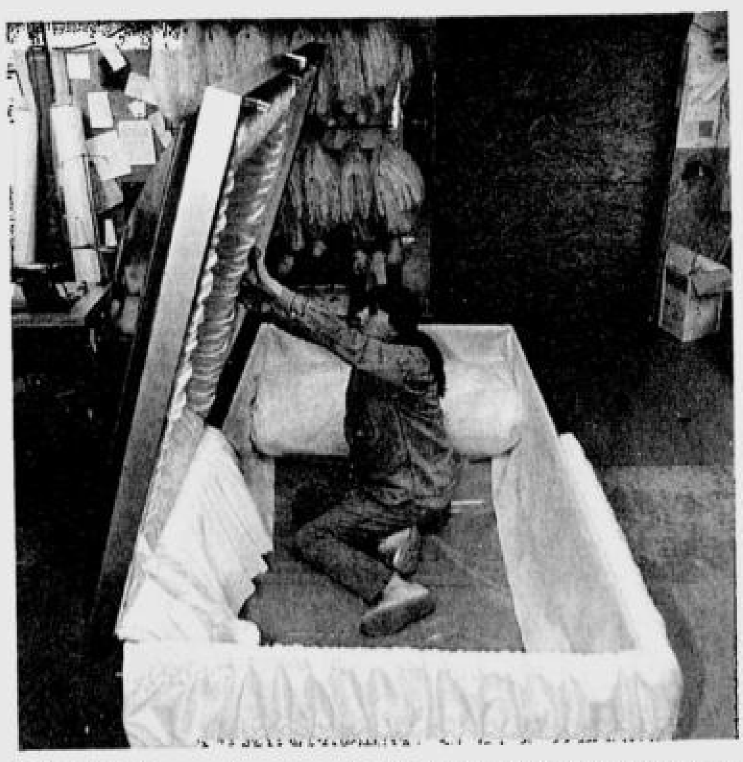
A federal bankruptcy judge sided with Smith in the fight over her late husband's estate, awarding her $474 million. That was reduced to about $89 million by a federal district judge, then thrown out altogether by a federal appeals court. *AP*

Biggest, best and the rest: Zany records of 2005

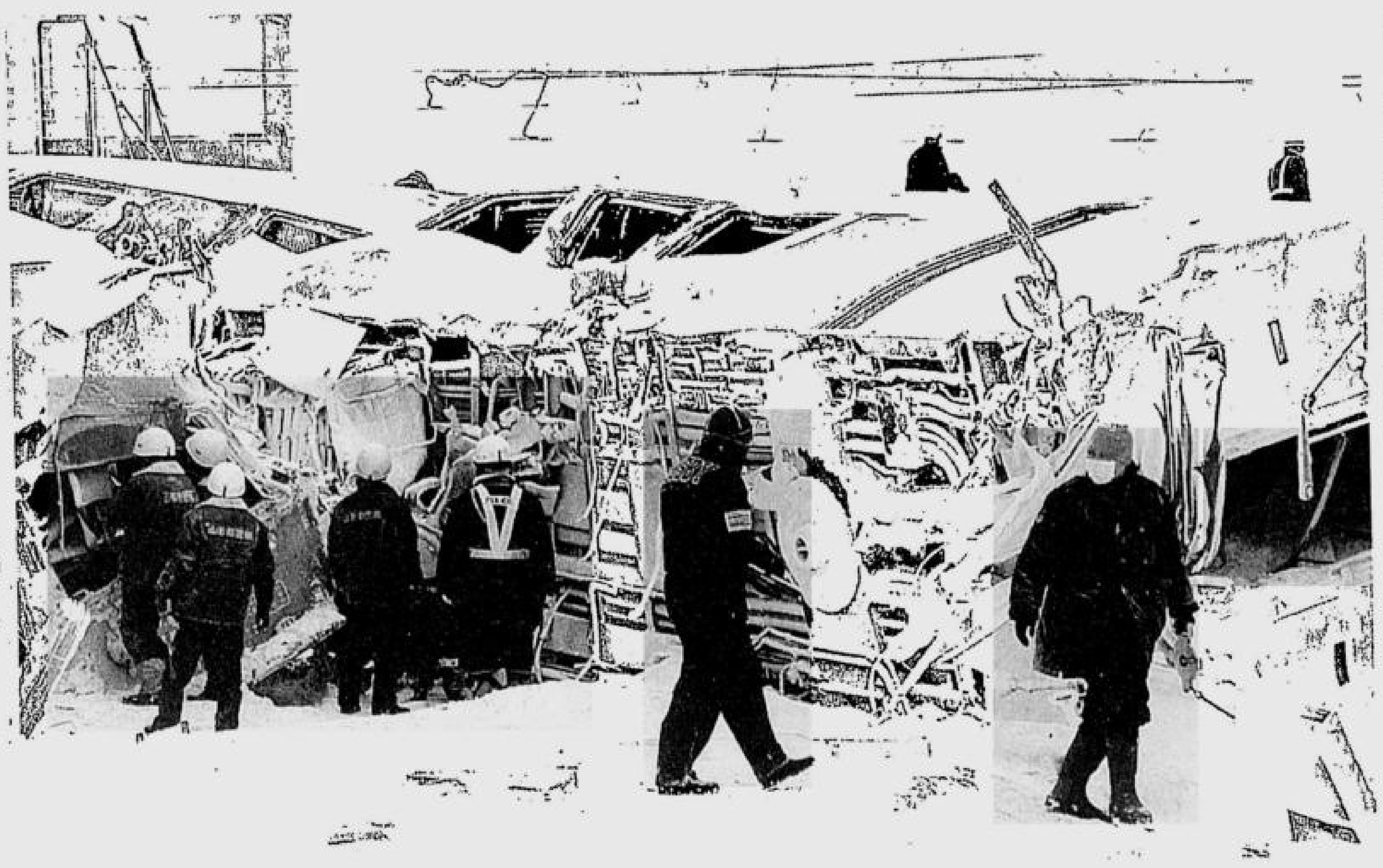
PARIS—ALONGSIDE TRAGEDIES, WARS and natural disasters the year just ending brought its share of unusual, outrageous, tragi-comic and just downright silly news items.

As usual, a lot of them concerned record performances. A selection:

- A young couple in the German state of Bavaria engaged in a kiss that lasted just over 31 hours—proving their love was a clear 33 seconds stronger than that of the two Americans who had previously held the record.
- Gays and lesbians in the north German city of Hamburg braved cold and rain to claim a new world record for a group hug, huddling no fewer than 16,000 people together for 10 seconds. The previous record was collectively held by 5,117 Canadian students.
- Alexis Lemaire, a 24-year-old student in Reims, France, claimed a world record for working out the 13th root of a 200-digit number by mental arithmetic. The feat, checked by a notary, took him 48 minutes and 51 seconds.
- Also in the math department, Akira Haraguchi, a 59-year-old psychiatric counselor in Japan, recited from memory the value of "pi," a constant which consists of an infinite string of digits, to 83,431 decimal places. It took him 13 hours to beat the previous record, also set by a Japanese, of a mere 54,000 digits.
- Meanwhile, another Japanese man set an athletics world record by running 100 meters in 22.04 seconds. It doesn't sound much until you learn that Kozo Haraguchi, from the southern city of Miyazaki, was aged 95. He shaved almost two seconds off the record for men aged 95-99, previously held by an Australian.
- A 79-year-old South African man improved on his already standing Guinness record for the person known to have made the largest number of blood donations, at 350. Maurice Creswick said he was inspired to begin giving blood when he witnessed a horrible road accident at the age of 11.
- Not necessarily a record, but seriously big: a company that makes specialist coffins for extremely large people in the US state of Indiana said it had built a casket 2.1 meters wide. It was for a man who died in Alaska weighing 400 kg, the Goliath Casket Company said.
- Also grave, but less gloomy: a British historian won a posthumous mention in the Guinness Book of Records for two long-dead Welsh people, whose headstone showed that they had been married for no less than 81 years by the time the wife died, aged 105. The putative record was set, by Thomas and Elizabeth Morgan from the town of Cwmbran, in the 19th century.
- The preceding feat was meanwhile being challenged by the living, in the form of Percy and Florence Arrowsmith, also of Britain. They celebrated their 80th wedding anniversary in June, he aged 105 and she at 100. "We don't argue much these days, only when I want to watch the soaps (soap operas) on television," she told reporters.
- And on a seasonal note, Andy Park from the English town of Melksham was probably unbeatable in the yet-to-be-created category of people with the largest number of Christmas meals under their belts. He claimed to have celebrated the festival, complete with traditional turkey, mince pies, decorations and presents, every day of the year for the past 12 years. "I've never, ever, got bored of it," he told reporters. *AFP*



DEBBY Hollingsworth works on the interior of a 48-inch oversized coffin made out of 20-gauge steel May 29 at the Goliath Casket Company in Lynn, Indiana. Advertised as serving the needs of the oversized casket community for nearing 20 Years, the Goliath Casket Company will make between 600 to 800 oversized coffins this year alone. AFP



INVESTIGATORS examine snow-covered cars of an express train after its derailment in Shonai, northern Japan, Dec. 26. AP

4 killed as Japan express train jumps off tracks during blizzard

TOKYO—RESCUE WORKERS on Monday pulled the body of a fourth passenger from the twisted and snow-blown wreckage of a train that crashed in northern Japan after derailing during a blizzard.

Five of the train's six carriages left the tracks in strong winds late Sunday north of Tokyo. Three carriages toppled over and the front car slammed into a rail-side shack, local police said.

Rescuers crawling through wrecked carriages during a severe snowstorm had found the bodies of three passengers by early Monday. Some 33 other passengers were injured in the accident.

As the ongoing snowstorm blanketed the wrecked train, rescuers pulled out the final body of a trapped passenger shortly after 9 a.m. some 14 hours after the accident.

"We presume he was already dead when he was rescued... as he was not breathing and no heartbeat was felt," said a fire department official.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi called the accident "regrettable," telling reporters: "We must make sure we find the cause while treating the injured people."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe promised to make "all-out efforts to prevent a recurrence."

Rescue efforts were hampered by the bad weather as well as difficulty accessing the damaged carriages.

"Inside the train was a mess while snow and winds were blowing into shattered windows," the fire department official said.

"Besides, the accident site was in the middle of snow-covered rice fields. It was difficult for large vehicles to go through narrow farm roads."

The train derailed in strong winds soon after it crossed a bridge over a river, police said.

It was travelling between Amarume and Sakata stations on the Uetsu Line, 350 km north of the capital, carrying 44 passengers and two crew when it derailed.

Television footage showed the carriages lying on their sides and partially torn open.

Train operator JR East apologized for the accident.

"We would like to apologize deeply to the people killed and injured as well as to their relatives," JR East president Mutsutake Otsuka told a pre-dawn news conference.

The company reported that the train driver, who survived the crash, had applied the brakes manually after hearing an unusual sound.

"Strong winds hit the train after it passed the bridge, lifting it off," Jiji Press news agency quoted the driver, 29-year-old Takashi Suzuki, as telling police.

Due to heavy snow, the train is believed to have been running more than one hour behind schedule, JR East said.

Many parts of Japan have been hit by record snowfall and storms this month. At least nine people have died due to unusually heavy snow in Fukui, in central Japan, since Dec. 14, a municipal official said.

Some 107 people were killed and around 550 injured when a commuter train jumped the tracks and smashed into an apartment tower in the western city of Amagasaki in April, in Japan's worst rail accident since 1963. *AFP*

China uncovers $35B in gov't funds abuse

BEIJING—CHINESE AUDITORS have uncovered 290 billion yuan ($35 billion) in funds illegally spent by government offices in the first 11 months of this year, state media said Monday.

The improper spending was found during a nationwide annual audit of 22,000 officials by the National Audit Office, Xinhua news agency said.

Details were not given but previous findings about misspending involved officials using public funds to build apartments for employees or to give themselves bonuses.

About 196 of the officials were disciplined by their superiors or prosecuted in court, the report said, which cited sources with a national audit conference that opened in Beijing Monday.

The annual audits are an attempt by the government to stem a rising tide of corruption, which is tarnishing the Communist Party's image and fueling ordinary people's anger against the government.

Next year, the audit authority plans to scrutinize some of the branch offices of China's biggest commercial banks, the Bank of China, the Bank of Communications and the China Merchants Bank, Xinhua said.

Corruption is endemic in China and has grown during its economic reform period, threatening the legitimacy of the communist government, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said earlier.

In a report, the OECD said corruption represented between 3.0 and 5.0 percent of China's gross domestic product, or between 409 and 683 billion yuan ($50-84 billion) in 2004.

China's 2004 state audit report showed that 9.06 billion yuan ($1.1 billion) was misappropriated by central government departments and 14.5 billion yuan was improperly spent by top state companies.

It was unclear why the amount of embezzled funds found this year was so much greater than last year, but not all of the misused funds identified last year were included in last year's report.

Types of embezzlement included the widespread use of slush funds and diversion of government money into private bank accounts or subsidiary government-run companies.

The annual audit reports have been open to public scrutiny only since 2003. And there are still no detailed laws requiring the judiciary and police to investigate auditing irregularities.

Chinese media has also criticized the lack of detail about wrongdoing and about how offenders were punished. *AFP*

China says it has made a better bird flu vaccine

BEIJING—CHINA HAS DEVELOPED a new and more efficient bird flu vaccine which can also protect its massive poultry population against another poultry killer known as Newcastle disease, state media said Monday.

The vaccine, which was developed by the Harbin Veterinary Research Institute in northeast China, is the world's first live vaccine against bird flu and Newcastle disease, the China Daily said, quoting the Ministry of Agriculture..

In addition to being injected, it can be administered orally, nasally or by spraying, the ministry's chief veterinary officer Jia Youling was quoted as saying.

Currently China is using a vaccine that must be injected.

"The mass-application techniques can not only significantly reduce labor costs but also increase immunity among fowls," Jia said.

"The shot will also be very inexpensive as its production cost is only one-fifth of the inactivated vaccines available on the market," he said.

The government approved the vaccine for mass production on Friday, with one billion shots expected to be produced by the end of this month, the China Daily said.

It will be used from the beginning of next year in combination with other vaccines, Jia said. *AFP*

Japan: Relations with North Korea depends on resolution of abductions

TOKYO—JAPAN WILL NOT NORMALIZE TIES with North Korea unless a feud over Pyongyang's past abductions of Japanese nationals is resolved, the government's top spokesperson said on Monday.

Japan and North Korea have been locked in a bitter dispute over North Korea's abductions of Japanese in the 1970s and 1980s to help train Pyongyang's spies.

At weekend discussions in Beijing, the two sides agreed to resume talks to establish diplomatic ties while handling two other issues—the abduction issue and Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs—through separate parallel talks.

Despite the new format for future talks, which the two countries agreed to try to hold by the end of January, Japan's stance on the abduction issue was unchanged, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe said.

"Our basic, unwavering principle is that we will not normalize ties (with North Korea) unless the abduction issue is resolved," Abe told a news conference.

"Even though three tracks (for talks) have been established, that will not lead, for example, to the abduction issue being left behind while normalization negotiations move forward rapidly," he said.

Normalization talks would discuss issues related to the settlement of the past, he added.

North Korea has pressed Tokyo to make reparations for Japan's often brutal colonization of the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi echoed Abe's views.

"(The abduction issue) won't be left behind. I hope that (North Korea) will show an even more active response from now on," the Kyodo news agency quoted Koizumi as saying.

North Korea has admitted abducting 13 people in the 1970s and 1980s to help train spies. Five have returned to Japan with their children, and Pyongyang says the other eight are dead.

Pyongyang has stated that the abductee issue is settled, but Tokyo wants more information on the eight and another three who Japan says were also kidnapped.

Japan last held normalization talks with North Korea in October 2002 in Kuala Lumpur.

By agreeing to hold normalization talks—which are expected to take up possible economic aid for the impoverished North—in parallel with talks on abductions and security, analysts said Japan was trying to offer an incentive to North Korea.

"The possibility of North Korea making a (positive) decision increases somewhat if economic assistance is dangled in front of their eyes," said Noriyuki Suzuki, chief analyst at Radiopress news agency, which specializes in monitoring North Korea.

A quick solution seems unlikely, however, Suzuki said.

"The working-group (format) was arrived at even though North Korea insists that the abduction issue has already been settled."

"I get the feeling that there are lots of difficulties that lie ahead," he said, adding that bilateral talks were unlikely to accomplish much unless six-way talks aimed at persuading North Korea to scrap its nuclear programmes also make progress. *Reuters*

Old year to linger a second longer

WASHINGTON—HATE IT OR LOVE IT, BUT for some in the world the old year of 2005 will stick around just a tad longer—but not long enough to allow champagne to go stale.

According to the US National Institute of Standards and Technology, Dec. 31 will last this year in parts of the world west of the Greenwich Mean Time meridian not just 24 hours but 24 hours and one second.

An extra second has accrued to the year because of the vagaries in Earth's rotation speed over the past seven years.

To keep up with the planet, a leap-second will be added by official US timekeepers and their foreign colleagues to atomic clocks around the world.

Asians and Middle Easterners should feel be happier about the addition because for them, the extension will fall on Jan. 1, a non-working day.

The procedure will begin at 23:59:59 GMT on Dec. 31, the institute said. Standard-setting atomic clocks around the world will then show 23:59:60 GMT before moving to their usual 00:00:00 GMT, which will mark the arrival of Jan. 1, 2006.

In the eastern United States, the addition will occur at 7:00 pm and should have no significant effect other than to stretch out by a second the December 31 happy hour. *AFP*

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

This is to correct the misinformation that has been widely circulated in the media regarding the ownership of the LTA Building on 118 Perea Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City.

Following the early morning strafing of the LTA Building last 7 December 2005, a group of disgruntled soldiers calling themselves "Enlightened Warriors" claimed responsibility for the shooting and the media quoted their explanation for their deed as that the LTA Building was the "corporate corruption headquarters of the Arroyos." Thereafter, most, if not all, media accounts of the incident referred to the LTA Building as being an Arroyo family-owned building.

During the recent annual meeting of the LTA Condominium Corporation (LTACC), the thirteen (13) unit owners of the LTA Building, which include the Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI), Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas (KBP) and the Philippine Wood Producers' Association (PWPA), agreed to issue a public statement in the interest of truth.

Contrary to media reports, the LTA Building is not owned by the Arroyo family. It is a Condominium with units owned by several persons and entities, most of whom have nothing to do with the affairs of the Arroyo family.

The building is indeed named in memory of Lourdes Tuason Arroyo, the founder and former chairperson of the building's developer, LTA Inc., the real estate company of the Arroyo family. Being a real estate company, LTA Inc. sold most of the units way back in 1981 and has since become only one of the owners of the LTA Building.

We trust that in the interest of truth and factual reporting, the media shall henceforth NOT refer to the LTA Building as being owned by the Arroyo family.

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President & Director
LTA CONDOMINIUM CORPORATION
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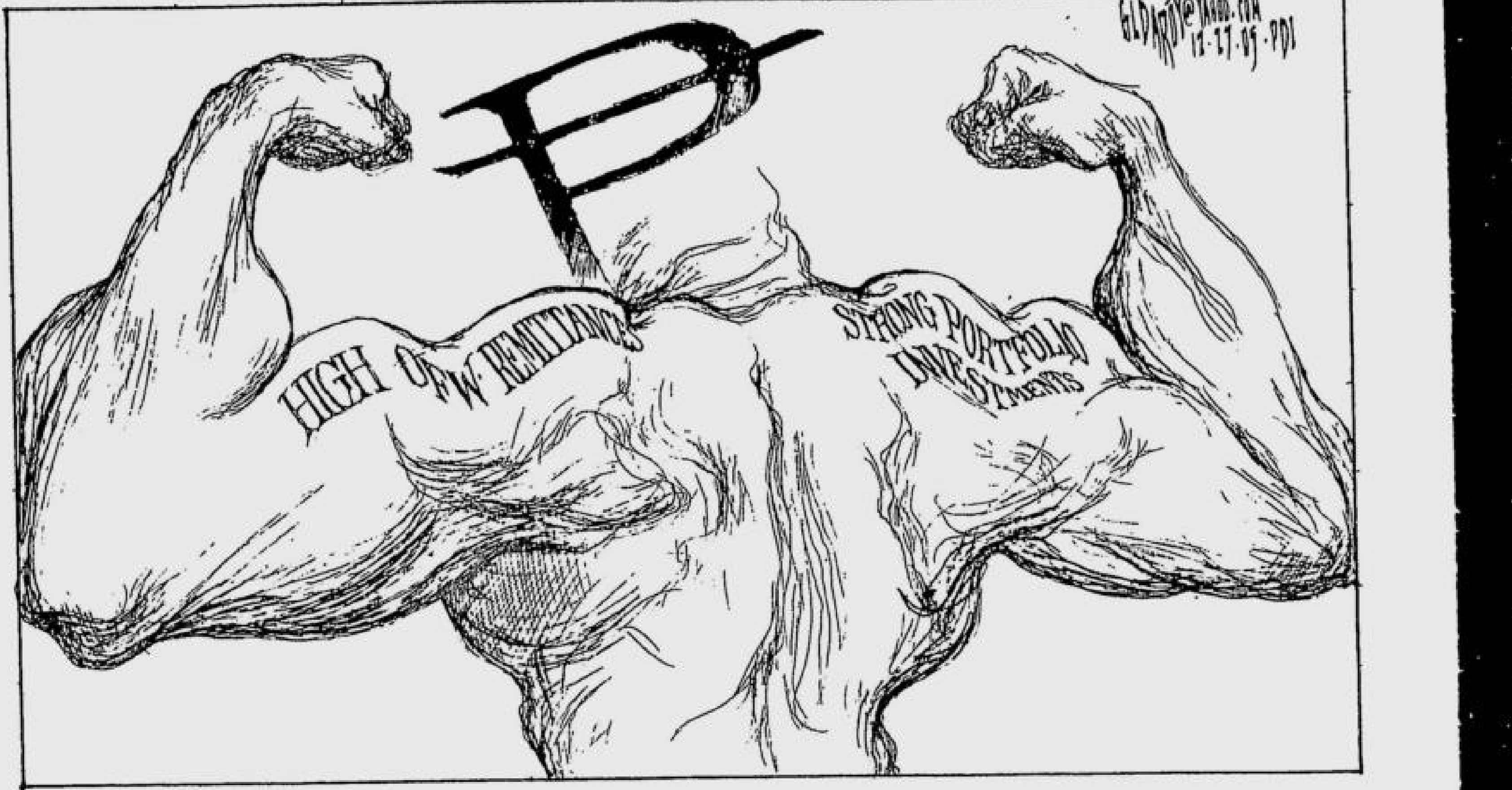


Slaughter of innocents

EDITORIAL

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW SAYS THAT KING Herod was jealous of the newly born Jesus. In an attempt to kill the newborn Messiah, he ordered all the children (aged two years old and under) in Bethlehem and its environs killed. But Jesus' parents Joseph and Mary had been forewarned in a dream and they took the Infant Jesus with them to Egypt.

Matthew's account is the sole basis for Christendom's commemoration of what is known as "The Slaughter of the Innocents." Two websites in the Internet say the story is "a pure invention": none of the other gospel writers ever referred to it. They ask why John the Baptist was not killed, he being of the same age as Jesus and living in that region. And Flavius Josephus, an important first-century Jewish historian, chronicled the reign of Herod in the "Antiquities of the Jews" but said nothing about the massacre.

But whether there really was a massacre or not, Filipinos have turned the supposed day of "The Slaughter of the Innocents" into "*Niños Inocentes,*" a day for pranks and practical jokes.

The slaughter of the innocents may have taken place more than 2,000 years ago, but in a very real sense, such a slaughter is occurring daily in the Philippines. And the massacre is not just physical; it is a slow, excruciating psychological, mental, emotional and spiritual death that hundreds of Filipino children are experiencing every year. Consider the following:

- The military said in 2002 that about 2,000 minors were fighting for the communist New People's Army, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Abu Sayyaf. The NPA said that minors were given non-combat duties and the MILF said it was not recruiting children under 15 as combatants. Both groups added that minors were sometimes caught in the crossfire.
- Of the 24.8 million children aged 5 to 17, more than 17 million are working, according to the 2001 Census. Most of these children are exploited and work long hours under unhealthy conditions.
- The 8 million overseas Filipino workers left 3-6 million children behind, the Unicef said in April 2005. "(F)atherless" or "motherless," the children do not get any training in values; some of them soon indulge in vices like drinking, gambling, drugs and promiscuous sex.
- More than 28 percent of children under the age of 5 are recognized as moderately or severely underweight, according to the World Children Organization. Junefe Payot of the Institute on Church and Social Issues, said that almost one-third (29.6 percent) of all the children in the Philippines are malnourished.
- In the academic year 2002 to 2003, of the 12.9 million students enrolled in elementary schools, only 66.85 percent completed their schooling. Of the 6 million high school students, only 59.79 percent were able to graduate.
- Some estimates say there could be as many as 700,000 street children in Metro Manila.
- The advocacy group End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes estimated in the 1990s that there were 60,000 child prostitutes all over the country. Others say their number could be as high as 100,000.
- The Unicef recently estimated that there are 12 million children living in extreme poverty.

Is this the way our children—the hope of the Fatherland, future homemakers and citizens—are living? Is this any way to treat young people who constitute 47.5 percent of our population?

Every year, thousands of children suffer an early death or a slow death because of poverty, the government's misplaced schedule of priorities, and general public apathy. Thousands more suffer a living psychological, mental, emotional and spiritual death.

We mourn the slaughtered innocents. Poet Friedrich Ruckert, in the fourth cycle of Mahler's "Kindertotenlieder" ("Songs on the Death of Children") says: "*Oft denk'ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen* (Often, I think they have only gone out)." It is an achingly beautiful poem, set to achingly beautiful and haunting music. Many of our children are not just "going out," many are dying, and unless we put a stop to "The Slaughter of the Innocents," we can never hope to have a strong, progressive nation in the future.

Those writing brushes

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"WHOEVER CAN HANDLE A WRITING BRUSH will never need to beg." – Chinese proverb.

In a sixth class town, in remote Northern Samar, 457 students handle writing brushes so well their school has walloped over 5,000 public high schools in the National Achievement Tests two years in a row. Lope de Vega National High School may head the pack again.

Staffed by 15 teachers, mostly with master's degrees, this provincial school topped the country-wide exams in 2003 and 2004. It trounced high-profile schools in centers like Manila, Cebu and Cagayan de Oro.

But then, so have other small, little-known but high-performing schools: Batanes National Science High, in northernmost Basco, and Tawi-Tawi School of Arts and Trade in the country's southernmost island. In Bongao, you can see on a clear day, well, not always, but Sabah at least.

So, how do you get to Lope de Vega? "On a 12-hour ride over bone-jarring roads from Tacloban City," winces lawyer Maria Jane Paredes, Visayas/Mindanao public affairs manager for Smart Communications. "But the wringer is worth it after you see what these kids, their teachers and officials achieved with so little."

LVHS is one of 28 schools being linked, by networked computers, to Internet. Backed by Philippine Business for Social Progress, Microsoft Philippines and the Department of Education, this project opens, to these remote schools, the world via satellite. "A good education," as an old Aklan proverb puts it, "is better than gold."

The Philippines is probably Asia's best half-educated country. Overall, primary enrollment is an impressive 94 percent. But classrooms are overcrowded, shoddy, short of books, staffed by underpaid and poorly trained teachers, etc.

By Grade IV, many students are barely able to read and write, let alone do sums. Poverty compels 36 out of every 100, to drop out. They stash writing brushes before Grade VI. Yet, "the fate of empires depends on the education of the youth," Aristotle said.

There's, however, a swelling number of private initiatives to bail out schools in crisis, INQUIRER's Eugenia Duran Apostol noted in her article "Education Revolution."

Some examples: PJ Lhuillier Foundation teamed up with Computer Assisted Learning Philippines and DepEd to meet cyberspace needs of students at Tarlac's San Manuel High School. With Santa Rosa officials, Toyota Motors builds classrooms for Laguna schools. (Filipino-Chinese business groups, in Cebu, donate sturdier, better-equipped schoolrooms which are built at half the cost it takes the public works department to build flimsier buildings.)

Magsaysay Awardee Mayor Jesse Robredo implements an education improvement program for Naga City schools, "sustained by practically the entire community." And in Negros Occidental, *Eskwelahan sang Katawhan Negros*, through strong community involvement, helped 441 schools in 19 towns—from securing better facilities to beefing up the training of teachers.

And DepEd's "Schools First Initiative" aims "to make education delivery responsive to the demands of communities ready to make changes possible."

Lope de Vega was ready, says Mayor Erlinda Palloc-Cinco. Despite skimpy internal revenue allotments, the town's modest education fund went for school facility improvements and books, especially on math, science and English. Since 1988, it paid the miscellaneous fees of students.

"Health and education top our priority list," Mayor Cinco says. Didn't United Kingdom's Prime Minister Tony Blair also say: "My three priorities for government (are) education, education and education."

Lope de Vega students share those priorities. Valedictorian Lailanie Valenciano, 15, recalls she stayed in the town when her parents—a taxi driver and a housewife—and three younger sisters left for Manila. "I was just seven and in second grade. Very few families, in our town own TV sets," she said. This lack of "distraction" enables students to focus and shine, despite poverty.

Salutatorian Jayson Jumadiao, 16, is a jeepney driver's only son. He credits his achievement to the dedication of competent teachers. He's raring to learn how to use computers. "With Internet, we can learn things we didn't have access to before."

Corporate donations to public schools doubled—from P600 million in 2003 to P1.2 billion in 2004. That looks impressive—until one considers we have 41,000 plus public schools, many of them short on just about everything. You also need scale to make "significant change," former Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus realistically points out.

Local government officials can provide that scale. Their kids' schools can be as good as Lope de Vega, if they moved beyond rhetoric to provision of resources. "In cash we trust."

On paper, 49 centavos out of every tax peso is spent by LGUs for salaries, notes "Decentralization in the Philippines," a joint study by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. "Maintenance and operating expenses" chew up another 34 centavos.

"Personal services expenditures are higher than officially reported," the study notes. "It's common practice to charge payments of temporary officials, like consultants, contractuals and job workers, to "maintenance."

Worse, local officials dip into the trough first. In Cebu towns of Mandaue, Pinamungajan, Liloan and Consolacion, officials ladled bonuses for themselves, the Commission on Audit complained. Former Gov. Pablo Garcia claimed "executive prerogative," when flayed for idling education funds in time deposits while students did without.

"Executive prerogative" for ignorance persists nationwide. So, there's little money left for teaching kids—as they do at Lope de Vega—how to handle those writing brushes.

(E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph)

Forget it

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

SOME BALIKBAYANS ASKED ME RECENTLY what I thought of the shift to the parliamentary system being peddled by Fidel Ramos, Jose de Venecia, and company. I said it was stupid. That was so, I said, for several reasons.

One, it is irrelevant. It misses the point completely. It is as much a solution to the present crisis as a conference on Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural designs is to a tottering building about to fall on the houses beside it. What is the problem? The problem is that we have an illegitimate president. She is illegitimate because she cheated in the last elections. The marvel is that some of her supporters actually argue that the "Hello Garci" tape is real enough but that it did not materially affect the outcome of the elections. Have we reached a pass when even professors of law and economics in UP can insist that if you catch a student cheating in an exam, you should not flunk him and expel him but ask yourself whether he could have passed anyway even if he hadn't cheated?

That is the problem. The solution is to shift to a parliamentary system? That is an answer you can only get in the Battle of the Brainless. Cheating is cheating. It has no place in either a parliamentary or presidential system. First solve the problem of an illegitimate head of government, then talk about changing the government. That is the rational sequence.

Indeed, all that show of Ramos demanding that GMA step down in 2007 to pave the way for the shift is a lot of wind-breaking. You catch a student cheating in an exam, you do not schedule when to flunk him and expel him, you do so posthaste. You do not give him a safety net to ease his transition to life outside school, you give him a taste of real life posthaste.

Two, it is superfluous. The problem is not our form of government, it is our party system. We do not have one. What we have are temporary groups or alliances which claim very little loyalty from its members. In this country, politicians do not join parties for principle, they join parties for convenience. They leave them as soon as they no longer offer room for advancement. This is a country whose foremost politicians have joined pretty much the whole gamut of parties.

A parliamentary system, more than a presidential one, demands the integrity of political parties. Elsewhere, parties stand for an ideological cause or political philosophy, the clash of their ideas in parliament moving the country forward. In Japan and Germany, playing musical chairs with parties is not just untenable it is unthinkable. It takes on the proportions of betraying the flag. It is treason. In those countries, you switch parties, you're dead. Here, you switch parties, you're happy. First, build real political parties, then talk about shifting to a parliamentary system.

I am tempted to suggest that politicians contemplating to join another party should first pass a test on the principles that party stands for. But you give the same politicians living in this country and claiming they are Filipinos a test about history, and they would probably flunk it too. Unless they cheat.

Three, a parliamentary system is more likely to be pernicious in this country than a presidential one. Not least because it would allow GMA to cling to power forever. Of course, she won't relinquish power after 2007. Where has Ramos been all this time? Someone who lies about not running, cheats the voters of their vote, and robs the citizens of their very soul will catch a glimmer of that thought? A parliamentary system was also how Marcos thought of getting out of the bind of not being able to run again. He couldn't be president for a third time but he could always be prime minister for a first time—and a second, and a third, ad infinitum, ad nauseam. Unfortunately for him, the Con-Con rejected it. So he declared martial law.

The only thing that's different between then and now is this: Marcos was an elected president before he became dictator. GMA is not.

But GMA aside, what makes a parliamentary system a threat rather than a promise for this country is that it can very easily be turned into mob rule. Ramos argues that a parliamentary system will make impeaching presidents a thing of the past. All a parliament has to do to remove a president who sucks is to vote no-confidence, forcing a change of government. Theoretically, of course, that is true. But in practice, the opposite is bound to be truer. A parliament can keep rather than oust a corrupt prime minister by continuing to repose confidence in him despite a popular outcry.

That is so especially in a situation such as ours, where there are no clear party lines and discipline to assure principled ideological debate. This is a country where you have a Juan Ponce Enrile and Miriam Defensor-Santiago vowing undying loyalty to Erap one day and vowing undying loyalty to Gloria the next. How can parliament even think to change government by a vote of no-confidence when politicians routinely desert their parties before the last vote in an election can be counted to join the winning one? What you will have is not coalition-building, what you will have is loot-sharing. Indeed, what you will have is not enlightened governance, what you will have is mob rule.

The killing of the impeachment bid some months ago by Congress offers an entire vista of the shape of things to come. Think of the parliament as an extended Congress, and you'll have a good idea of what we'll get. We'll have a parliament controlled by a Jose de Venecia or a Prospero Pichay without a Senate to check and balance it. That is not a legislature, that is a street gang.

A parliamentary system is the call of our times?

Forget it.

A grand time

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON SPELLS VACATION FOR most people, so this is perhaps the best time to recall a recent delightful cruise on the Adriatic Sea aboard the luxurious liner SilverSea, that my husband and I took, courtesy of our Tokyo-based daughter Christine and her Japanese husband, Keiichi. The 8-day cruise was the product of careful planning that took two years; it was also a multi-celebration to which they treated their two sets of parents: for our Japanese *balaes'* (Osamu and Keiko Miki's) 50th wedding anniversary; for our 40th wedding anniversary; and my birthday. We all rendezvoused in Athens and boarded the gleaming white ship at the pier of Piraeus. We were joined aboard by a Maryland-based Filipino couple, Col. Roland Baltazar (ret.), my husband's former pilot in the Philippine Air Force, his Ob-Gyn wife Milan Baltazar, and their two lovely daughters, Diana and Elizabeth. We all had a grand time.

* * *

The cruise began on the sun-drenched island of Mykonos, one of the most celebrated holiday destinations in Greece. Its colorful maze of narrow streets is lined with whitewashed houses with bright blue doors and shutters that match the Mediterranean's blue waters. Along the waterfront, the old houses are now restaurants, bars and discos catering to the international yachting crowd. Mykonos has 365 churches and chapels scattered around the island, with the famous windmills as a backdrop on the hillside. From Mykonos, we traveled along the Adriatic Sea, between the Italian and former Yugoslavian peninsulas, and docked at three beautiful towns of what's now known as Croatia.

The first was the ancient walled town of Dubrovnik, dubbed by Lord Byron as the "Jewel of the Adriatic" and declared by Unesco a world heritage treasure. Once referred to as the "Riviera of the Eastern Bloc," Dubrovnik was reconstructed in part after the war in the Yugoslav peninsula in the '90s, but it has kept its marvelous beauty.

The other two towns were Hvar Island and Rovinjo, old, picturesque fishing towns that are now popular tourist destinations and artists' havens. It was our first visit to Croatia, and we were so enthralled by its beauty.

The last stopover was Venice, and though we had been there a few times before, it was an entirely different treat to enter it from a cruise ship and see the magnificent skyline dotted with churches and palaces—Canaletto's fabulous Venetian scene came alive.

My friend Ed Puyat Reyes is the honorary consul of Croatia, and he so kindly facilitated the issuance of our visas from its embassy in Indonesia. Our thanks to Ed.

* * *

The cruise was a marvelous treat of gorgeous international cuisine, luxurious accommodations, entertainment shows and various recreational/sports facilities. The dinners were dress-up affairs. SilverSea has a solid reputation for pampering guests and one reason is that it has an international crew of 270 people. It was particularly meaningful to us that the majority of them were Filipinos. How they pampered us, even cooking an entire Filipino dinner for our *balaes*. The Pinoys are held in esteem and affection by both colleagues and clients because of their professionalism and legendary *cariño*—few nationalities can match the Pinoys in TLC. Many of them left good-paying jobs in RP for better pay and excellent work conditions. For instance, wine waitress Lolita Modesto of Pasig was a senior mechanical engineer with the National Telecommunications Corp. when she signed up with SilverSea.

Among the Pinoy crew we befriended were: Jovy Mendoza, wine waitress (Taguig), Jun de Guzman, bartender (Nueva Ecija), Ricky Villasana, bartender (Malate), Virgilio Navamra, wine waiter, Darwin Claudio, bartender (Tondo), Rey Cruzada, waiter (Cavite), Rodgie Galfo Jr., waiter (Iloilo), Eduardo Bill, cook (Cavite), Rogelio Lauron, wine waiter (Pangasinan), Mario Paciente, waiter (Quiapo), Pons Panganiban, wine waiter (Parañaque), Tess Amarles, wine waitress (Dinalupihan, Bataan), Eddie Chua, waiter (Sorsogon), Generosa Perez, suite stewardess (Pangasinan and Manila) and Bamba Paz, wine waitress.

* * *

From Venice we went our separate ways. My husband and I took a train to Rome and stayed at the apartment of our longtime friend, sculptor and former labor sectoral representative Tomas Concepcion. My birthday began with a Mass at St. Peter's Basilica and a visit to the tomb of Pope John Paul II. The queues to JPII's tomb were still very long, and many devotees still shed tears. We also visited the resting place of Blessed Pope John XXIII under an altar beneath the great dome of Michaelangelo at St. Peter's. My husband had personally met this jovial pope when he was still a lieutenant and aide-de-camp to then foreign secretary and vice president Emmanuel Pelaez decades ago. John XXIII, who was a corporal in World War I, predicted he would be general someday.

My husband then treated me to an Italian meal at a small restaurant near the Vatican. From there, we caught the bus to Viale Bruno Buozzi, to pay our respects to St. Josemaria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei, at his shrine in the Church of Our Lady of Peace. We capped the day with a good Italian meal to which Ambassador Philippe Lluhuiller and his pretty wife Edna treated us.

From Rome, we hopped on a train to Napoli and caught a regional train to Sorrento for some sight-seeing, before catching the bus to the fabled Positano where we stayed overnight and had breakfast at a place overlooking the town. We returned to Rome the next evening and then caught the train again to Tarquinia, Tom Concepcion's beautiful country estate, from where he drove us the next day to Fuimicino Airport for our flight back to Manila.

Children after the tsunami

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

FOR YEARS AND MAYBE DECADES TO COME, Dec. 26 will always be remembered the world over for the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami that killed more than 200,000 people in an arc of destruction that stretched from Indonesia to Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, the Maldives and some coastal areas of Africa.

Because most of the areas hit by the tsunami were seaside towns that boasted of beaches and beach resorts that were quite popular among foreign tourists, the disaster had an impact far beyond the borders of the affected countries.

In Thailand, in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, many of the casualties were tourists from distant lands, taking a break from the bleak winter weather to spend the holidays in the tropics. There were even some Filipino tourists caught in the post-Christmas tragedy, though local TV reporters chose to focus on Filipinos employed in the hotels and resorts in Phuket. So even if our own calendar of commemoration highlights the destructive rains, floods and mudslides that killed thousands in Quezon and Aurora around this time last year—as well as the floods that swamped several towns in Mindoro Oriental, including the capital Calapa just a week ago—we nonetheless feel a link of commiseration with the communities devastated by the tsunami.

Were it not for an accident of geography, we might well have been a spot on that arc of destruction, given that experts had long predicted the "next big one" would strike lands along the Pacific Rim, the so-called "Ring of Fire," where the Philippines belongs.

Unfortunately, all the wisdom we seem to gain from an awareness of our geologic vulnerability is hindsight, born of previous experience and tragedy, like the Pinatubo eruption and the Northern Luzon earthquake. One reason we join in remembering the Indian Ocean tsunami is the possibility of culling lessons—not just from the disaster itself but also from its aftermath: the relief and recovery effort (including the rescue of survivors and the salving of their physical wounds); and the initiatives to help them recover from the psychological and emotional trauma they went through.

* * *

LAST October, the Asian edition of Time magazine featured "Asia's Heroes" and included one surprising entry: a girl of 14 named Zaeema Ismail who lives on an island in the Indian Ocean called "Gemendhoo," part of the Maldives archipelago.

Zaeema's story was remarkable among the 20 tales of accomplishment, tenacity, inspiration, charisma and bravery—including those of other tsunami survivors and relief workers—not for the scale of her accomplishment or the significance of her achievement; but because it symbolized the need to recognize the importance of intimate and personal achievements in the wake of tragedy.

The short write-up on Zaeema mentions how her family—reduced to her mother, younger brother, two sisters and herself after the tsunami killed her father and grandmother—simply "imploded" in the wake of unspeakable tragedy. But with youthful pluck and the help of local Unicef volunteers, the teen-ager "took charge of her family," attending a trauma workshop at the refugee center and learning ways to coax her family out of the depression and denial that had left them mute and emotionally distant from each other.

"This was a simple girl who did some simple things and achieved something extraordinary. She held her family together," the write-up concludes.

* * *

ZAEEMA'S story gains resonance in the wake of findings of a study—conducted by Unicef among children in the tsunami-affected areas—involving 1,633 children, 8 to 17 years old, in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia. The survey results illustrate both the resilience and vulnerability of children caught in a massive disaster. Despite their own suffering and the unspeakable sights they had witnessed, the majority of the children surveyed said they were still confident about the future. Though a Unicef regional official warned that "fear and anxiety persist, and children themselves express the need for continued education, healthcare and psychological support."

Some 80 percent of the children in India, Sri Lanka and Thailand said they were "hopeful, happy and confident" about the future. But children in Indonesia held the least optimistic views, with one-third believing their lives would not improve. "This may reflect the fact that a staggering 69 percent of the children surveyed in Indonesia had lost a family member," the report states.

But even if they express confidence in what awaits them, the children still experience twinges of fear and uncertainty. More than half the children surveyed in India and Sri Lanka said they fear another earthquake or tsunami, and 76 percent of respondents in Thailand feared the loss of a loved one. "More than one-third of children polled in Indonesia said they often feel alone," the report added.

* * *

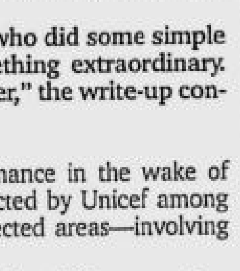
REFLECTING both their optimism and anxiety about the future, the children most often mentioned their need for "support to stay in school," with lack of money and the need to work to help support their families as the top reasons they gave for not going to school.

Though many of the respondents are indeed back in school and coping with the loss of family members and friends, their lives are still far from back to normal. In India, 58 percent of the children said they cannot spend as much time with people as before the tsunami, and 52 percent of children in Sri Lanka said they cannot participate in beach-related activities, like swimming or playing on the beach, unafraid. In Indonesia, 24 percent of the children said they often felt hungry, while 19 percent said they were not eating as regularly as before the tsunami.

Christmas in Philippine Art

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper



THE DECEMBER 1944 ISSUE OF PHILIPPINE Review carries an article by I.V. Mallari, who wonders about the lack of notable paintings done by local painters on the subject of Christmas despite the vaunted claim of the Philippines as the only Christian nation in Asia. In the Vargas collection, the Alvero collection, or the Philippine Museum of Art and History could be found not an oil, pastel, or pencil drawing of the Nativity or the Adoration of the Magi, both favorite subjects of Italian, Flemish and Dutch masters from the Middle Ages onwards. What he fails to consider is that all those Medieval and Renaissance painters had patrons who commissioned the works and specified the subject matter. It was also during the period that monasteries, churches and cathedrals were being built all over Europe. Religious orders had a need for these paintings.

Although not a painting—but certainly a work of art on the Nativity—was the polychrome retablo in Dr. Jose Bantug's collection, originally from the church of Pasig, Rizal. Mallari mentions other religious basreliefs in the Bantug collection that were destroyed during the war. More is the pity that not even photographs remain. He had a "Pieta" from Batangas, the "Four Evangelists"—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—from Romblon, "Stations of the Cross" from Puerto Rivas in Bataan, a "Crucifixion" from Abucay also in Bataan, "Christ Nailed To The Cross" and "Longinus Piercing the Side of Christ with his Lance" from Laguna, the "Raising of the Cross" with Jerusalem in the background from Iloilo, the "Virgin of Guadalupe" (mentioned by Francisco Colin, S.J. in 1663) from Taytay, Rizal and a carving of the Virgin on a house post by an unknown Pampango sculptor. Most of these were polychromic. (Eat your hearts out, present-day collectors; and this was just one collector.)

There were many Madonnas, one a rendition by the skeptic Hernando Ocampo, but these were not strictly Christmas paintings; they were more of a celebration of the Virgin or of women. Mallari theorizes that the lack of Christmas paintings by Filipinos was due to the low regard of local artists—such as, Resurreccion Hidalgo, Juan Luna and Rafael Enriquez—for the Roman Catholic Church when the art of painting in this country reached its apogee. Caught in the liberal thought prevalent in Europe in those days, painters like Luna were more interested in social issues. Most of the paintings had to do with "man's inhumanity to man," rather than religious subjects.

Mallari also believes that the fervor that drove the construction of church buildings and their embellishment petered off because of the "greed, rapacity and arrogance" of the friars. (The comment is part and parcel of what is generally referred to as "La Leyenda Negra" or "Black Legend" where Spain is portrayed as the granddaddy of all ogres.) Whether religion had really been relegated to a minor concern during the war years may be open to question. It may not have been due to a dislike for the friars or the Catholic religion; it may just be that the winds of change had shifted away the focus from religion as the primary force of existence. The Industrial Revolution changed not just the way goods were manufactured and the Enlightenment had replaced God with man at the center of the universe.

By the turn of the century Filipino artists allegedly turned their attention to economic, social and political issues, and business began to gain ascendancy over religion. All this could have been due to American values that put premium on affluence, and an ensuing decline in influence of the spiritual in the lives of Filipinos. The schoolhouse vied with the church as the most important building by its size, prominence and its mission as a cultural dynamo in Philippine communities. It is well-known that education played a prominent role in the spread of US culture in the same manner that European culture spread through the Catholic religion.

Citing as an example Fernando Amorsolo's canvas in the Alvero collection, which depicts a Christmas scene, Mallari notes that Filipino painters were recording their reactions to social and sociological aspects of Christmas. The painting shows the patio of the church alive with a crowd of vendors and holiday-makers and gives only a glimpse of the interior of the church in which a Mass is being celebrated. The focus has shifted from the sacred to the profane.

Mallari adds that it was in the 1930s that Filipino artists and writers became socially conscious, "when political leaders began to discourse on social justice, and when the common man himself began to clamor for his rights as a citizen and to complain of his pitiful lot in society." (Gee, if he was complaining then, imagine what his descendants are doing now—wailing and gnashing their teeth, no doubt.) Painters began to portray the discrepancy in the celebration of Christmas by the haves and the have-nots. A manifestation of this new consciousness is a painting in the National Museum of Art and History; it shows Christ as a poor man knocking in vain on the door of a palatial residence. Unfortunately, except for his comment that the painting wasn't particularly a good one—and he didn't even explain how it ever managed to merit a place on a museum wall, Mallari doesn't bother to mention the painter.

* * *

It's never too late to wish for the peace and joy of Christmas to reign in our hearts, especially when we hear the words of that old carol—and be reminded of the real meaning of the season—"And man will live forever more because of Christmas Day."

High blood

YOUNG BLOOD

Kim Boysie A. Enage

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

SO YOUNG, YET SO "HIGH BLOOD." THAT'S THE USUAL reaction of friends—all perplexed and surprised—upon being told that, at 29, I'm already grappling with hypertension that sometimes peaks at 160/100. They bewail the thought and the cruelty it represents. To them, this is youthful verve betrayed so soon by a serious affliction. This twenty-something's grit is prematurely "under fire."

My friends are only actually echoing my heart's lament. I am aghast that the ailment is now a silent killer that stalks millions of Filipinos. And, I am terrified at the thought that it cuts across age groups, apparently, with no intent to spare even the young.

Hypertension was something I saw coming. My maternal lineage does not lack for hypertensives, although most of them caught the high blood bug at an age way beyond 29. And, well, my lifestyle is not one that seriously makes a sincere attempt to avoid it, except perhaps for my unwavering stand against smoking and drinking.

But despite the "signs," it was a revelation when I was medically declared hypertensive. As I cowered on what I thought was my deathbed, I had a biting glimpse of where my continued neglect and apathy could end.

Inside the emergency room, fear began to gnaw at my self-confidence and self-control, when, despite a couple of medicines, my BP showed no immediate signs of dropping to a safer point. I continued to complain of severe headache, neck pain and vertigo, and no one really seemed to know exactly how far I was from the danger zone. At times, I felt I was losing my consciousness, but I somehow managed to hang on. Sensing my anxiety, the doctor told me to relax lest my condition would worsen. It was rather a tough act to heed his advice because, within hearing range, a patient was throwing up while another was screaming in pain. And then, this tactless nurse just casually recalled loudly how, earlier in the day, a guy in his 30s succumbed to high blood. As the rising tide of fear swirled around me, my mind reluctantly toyed with the prospect of dying and dying young. Whatever was left of me was slowly wrestled with morbid thoughts and the feeling of defeat.

Past the crucial hours, the doctor made it clear that if I wanted to avoid a much worse scenario, I have to take drastic and immediate changes in my diet and lifestyle. No more soda, no more coffee, no more chocolates. I also have to turn my back on my all-time favorites like lechon, crispy pata and fried chicken. In their place, she recommended a fish-and-green-vegetable-diet and issued a stern warning against oily, salty and cholesterol-rich food. Sadly, the proscription also covered pizza, pasta and just about everything in the realm of my most beloved fast food treats.

As the list of don'ts and deprivations grew, I thought hypertension takes the fun out of everything. I felt like I was rudely being interrupted in the middle of a gastronomic ecstasy. I felt like I was being forced to immediately leave a table filled with the most inviting culinary wonders.

The "withdrawal syndrome,"—if I may call it that—was not easy. It meant not only having oatmeal, tuna and wheat bread for breakfast; and getting used to paksiw or tinolang isda for lunch and dinner. It also required faithful adherence to everything else that the doctor had ordered—and mind you, it is a struggle, especially when no one is looking.

This is life taking a curious turn. Suddenly, I am never to leave home without my medicine. Suddenly, I am supposed to have my erratic BP regularly checked. From where I stand, I see at least three reasons which suggest that this calvary is far from over. First, I have yet to fully develop the habit of daily exercise. Second, I have yet to get used to an "early to bed, early to rise" routine. And third, I have yet to figure out how to avoid stress, given the fact that I go to law school and do other stressful things. Hypertension is a walk down some lonely road. And things around me are no longer the same.

But life goes on. I have learned that the best thing to do when one becomes "high blood" at 29 is to embrace it at the earliest possible time. This way, one is spared from further misery. This way, one gets to keep a good shot at whatever else lies ahead. In this game of life, as some opt to call it, there are indeed things that make better sense only after they have been warmly accepted. Some say it's submission to the greater scheme of things. Others simply say it is destiny. However they look at it, it ultimately means looking at the brighter side, no matter what. And I am glad that I have chosen to do exactly that. Otherwise, I would have missed the grandeur of love; otherwise, I wouldn't have noticed the kindness of those who care for me.

It's tempting to say that I've emerged from this life-altering experience as a changed man. This is a bold claim that's not necessarily about some personal renaissance of dramatically profound undertones. It's simply about the change in my attitude toward some of the obviously essential but usually ignored stuff in my hierarchy of priorities. That part of my life has now clearly been shaken. Where once stood big dreams, there is now just a fervent plea for better health. Where once dwelt the usual follies, there is now an incessant frolic with life's simple joys.

While writing this, my attention was drawn to an interesting irony. A "high blood" hoping to write for "Young Blood." The thought gives the picture of a hypertensive wallowing in the thrill of writing at a time that's way beyond his doctor-prescribed bedtime. This shows a man in the twilight of his 20s, looking to the advent of age 30 and beyond, embracing with much optimism and eagerness a life of hypertension. As I regaled myself with the paradoxes all these seem to suggest, I was reminded of how a young poet once described situations imbued with contradictions as "an elegy to oxymoron."

Sans the rhetoric and his impeccable way with words, he might have simply referred to this part as "moving on."

Kim Boysie A. Enage, 29, is a student at the UP College of Law. He also teaches accounting in UP Diliman. Weeks after his blood pressure peaked to what doctors considered as a dangerous level, he started losing weight. He has yet to fully recover as of this writing. When he bumps into friends who are aware of his condition, the first thing they usually ask is "How's your BP?"

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

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Corruption would be less in federal system

MANY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES leaders are advocating a centralized unicameral parliamentary system of government because, according to them, a bicameral legislature—as we have experienced—is prone to legislative gridlock.

However, worse than the problem of gridlock is graft and corruption, which may escalate or worsen under a centralized unicameral parliamentary system. We tried this system during martial law, under President Marcos.

Prof. Rene Azurin of the UP Gradate School of Business Administration and a ranking member of the Consultative Commission, warned that under the proposed centralized and unicameral parliamentary system, "The National Budget will become a huge pork barrel. Budget deliberations will just (turn into a) partitioning (of) funds to determine who gets how much." (PDI, 12/06/05) This may lead to state-sanctioned corruption.

In order to prevent the occurrence of more graft and corruption under a new parliamentary system, political science professors are suggesting a blending of the federal structure with the unicameral parliamentary system.

Under the proposed federal parliamentary system of government, the bulk of government funds, taxes, income and functions will be devolved and will be placed under the control and supervision of 12 proposed states and local government units. We will have financially stable, strong and self-reliant local governments. There will be less graft and corruption and there will be more progress and development in the countryside. This has been the experience of new democracies, like Malaysia, Japan and Australia, which have opted to adopt the federal parliamentary system of government.

In fact, the National Economic and Development Authority, through the current Medium-Term Development Plan it prepared for the country, recommends the adoption of the federal parliamentary system. The recommendation of Neda clearly validates these observations.

—LEOPOLDO T. CAUSING,
46 Mission Road Ext.,
Lapza, Iloilo City

(Un)christian practices

IT ALL STARTED WITH A COLUMN OF Conrado de Quiros in the Nov. 23 issue of the INQUIRER.

De Quiros lamented the kind of spirituality that Filipinos practice—which is more concerned with external appearances than with substance. He said: "What we have is a religion that has little to do with spirituality. You need only look at Archbishop Fernando Capalla to see it. That is what Filipinos being the most religious among Asians means: deeply upright, deeply crooked."

On the first day of December 2005, 61 individuals and two Catholic lay organizations came up with an ad in the Philippine Star, in defense of Archbishop Capalla.

On the same day, I received a text message from a very credible person. It called attention to the ad, urging me to stop buying the INQUIRER. I write this to express sadness over the apparent attempt to get back at De Quiros. That was some flogging that the bishop got from the INQUIRER columnist, but did the bishop have to seek vengeance?

De Quiros is a columnist and it is the wont of columnists to criticize. Archbishop Capalla is not a columnist, he is a bishop, a former president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, no less. He should not have hit back. Dishing out kind words in return should have come easy for him. It would have been more in keeping with his exalted position as a shepherd of Christ's flock if he had suffered in silence De Quiros' stinging criticism rather than allow his friends to hit back.

The ad lifted a quote from Proverbs 10:6: "Blessings crown the head of the righteous, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked." To me, the use of the quote was very sad: a bishop calling his critic "wicked" and himself "righteous"? Wow.

To hit back is, of course, instinctive among humans; but wouldn't that have been a rare opportunity for the bishop to allow the faithful a glimpse of the divine by choosing not to hit back?

After all, Archbishop Capalla was not the primary target. His name came up only as an example of the kind of spirituality which De Quiros was criticizing. And please, to the original source of the text, be factual. De Quiros did not call the bishop "deeply crooked." What he described as "deeply crooked" is the double-faced practice of Filipinos.

What he could have done was to write De Quiros and point out where he was wrong about the bishop. Much better, the prelate could have pointed out to De Quiros where he was wrong—not about the bishop—but about the Catholic faith for, indeed, it was plain that De Quiros was grossly misinformed.

Just as importantly, the bishop should have paused and asked these questions: "Was there a grain of truth in De Quiros' broadside? What have I done to cause him to believe so? And about the false spirituality that he is talking about, is that the practice of some? What can I do to correct it?"

—ABRAHAM LLERA,
abrahamvllera@yahoo.com

Vow against corruption all for show

I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT, JUST LIKE her other promises, President Macapagal-Arroyo's vow to stamp out graft and corruption during her term is not a serious one and is intended merely for show. I say this because twice she had been given a chance to appoint a nonpartisan Ombudsman who will prosecute anybody, high or low, without fear or favor.

In the first instance, she appointed Simeon Marcelo, who is identified with the law firm handling the cases of the Macapagal-Arroyo families. Was there any substantial accomplishment by Marcelo? None.

In the second. she appointed Merceditas Gutierrez. Though known as one of her allies, she has no substantial accomplishment record in fighting graft and corruption. I will wager that she will not touch any case involving the Macapagal-Arroyo family because she owes her appointment to GMA—just like Marcelo.

—PROCOPIO S. BELTRAN JR.,
president emeritus,
Philippine Trial
Lawyers Association Inc.,
prosbelt@yahoo.com

THE QUESTION lingers: Was the mispelled family name of the President a mere accident or intentional?

REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS
SANDAANG PISO
MANUEL A. ROXAS

An error for posterity not worth it

I WAS AMUSED AT THE MISSPELLED name of the President that was printed on the P100 bill. This was reported in the Nov. 24 issue of the INQUIRER. Either it was an honest mistake or a deliberate one, made by the people who had a hand in its production.

But on second thought, how could there have been an honest mistake considering that the printing or production of currency bills passes through the most stringent processes? I am inclined to believe that the mistake is part of the on-going campaign to ridicule the First Family.

I thought of keeping a copy for posterity. But I discarded the thought all together. The bill is not worth keeping: the succeeding generations might think that there was a time that the Philippines had a fake President. Let us put closure to this mistake.

—TRINIDAD ESTURAS PETEZA,
JP Rizal Street, Barangay Camambugan,
Daet, Camarines Norte 4600

Too hospitable for our own good?

WE HAVE BEEN VERY SOFT ON CRIMES. When public officials behave like the fox or wolf that guards the chicken coop, we ought to think—these public servants are stealing blind the Filipino people, about 50 percent of whom are in poverty (hungry, homeless, unclothed, uneducated, without health coverage).

I think we ought to say enough is enough. Let us awaken ourselves to the fact that by choosing not to care or not to do something about these stealing public servants, we are in fact acting as accomplices to their crimes.

Let's put these beasts away where they belong and let's see how we can feed the flock and sheep that the Lord has entrusted to us.

If con men in the Constitutional Commission are to surface, if asses in the Constitutional Assembly are to proliferate, if we want to encourage dynasties, we really do not need a democracy. And why do we have to give away ownership rights over our real estate and natural resources to foreigners? Japan would not let noncitizens touch even just the shells (dead shellfish) on its shores; but we Filipinos are so hospitable we want to take away from our citizens real property rights just to make aliens and visitors happy; and help officials line their pockets thick with dollars.

—AURORA RIEL,
aurora_riel@yahoo.com

Another view on Davide's legacy

TODAY, ELITISTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY groups around the country celebrate the life and times of now-retired Supreme Court Justice Hilario Davide Jr. At the forefront of the celebration is Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who has been the greatest beneficiary of Davide's favors.

While I do not wish to spoil the party for these people, let us at least not be carried away by the lavish praises being heaped upon this person. He is not a saint, and he is not infallible. He may look respectable, but many of his decisions of the Supreme Court during his term as the country's highest jurist have left more questions than answers in the minds of the people, as well as in the annals of local jurisprudence.

As an institution, the Supreme Court has suffered more blows to its integrity under Davide than at any other time in its history: scandals involving the misuse of the Judiciary Development Fund (JDF); outright meddling in executive matters, such as its declaring null and void the computerization contract approved by the Commission on Elections en banc and the Naia 3-Piatco deal, not to mention the Mining Act, which at first it ruled illegal then reversing the decision a year later.

But the biggest national tragedy perpetrated by the Davide court, which continues to haunt the country to this day, is its decision to legalize the unconstitutional ouster of President Estrada and declaring Ms Arroyo the rightful President of the country. This, despite the utter lack of basis for such a decision. The Constitution lists only four items that legalize presidential succession: death, permanent disability, resignation and impeachment. That is, of course, aside from general elections. None of these were present, yet the high court still decided to coin the quaint phrase "constructive resignation" to justify its decision favoring GMA.

Looking back at his career, it is even surprising that this non-practicing lawyer, who never even had any experience as a magistrate in the lower courts, actually managed to snare the position of chief justice. There is no telling how many strings he pulled, how many favors he called in, and how many powerful connections he used, just to get to where he is now. The least he could have done was use his position for the country's welfare. Instead, he set aside the sanctity of our laws to support the political interests of an illegal presidential usurper and that of the arrogant crowd of Edsa II supporters who pushed for her installation, with no regard whatsoever for what the Constitution says on such matters.

Such is the true and lasting legacy of Davide.

—MELVIN SABATE, 21-A Liamson St.,
Baranagay San Jose, Rodriguez, Rizal

IF you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@ inquirer.com.ph

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Protecting their (our) own

THE RAPE CASE FILED IN OLONGAPO city against American soldiers should be considered as a consequence of the individual behavior of the accused. It should not be made to affect the Visiting Forces Agreement and the RP-US relations.

As they are, the accused Americans were described to have acted neither in accordance with the standard operating procedure of the VFA nor within the chain-of-command structure. They acted on their own, in a personal way.

And if the Americans and their government are acting to protect them, that is just humane and obligatory; we Filipinos are doing the same to Filipinos accused of crimes in other countries.

—LIGORIO G.M. NAVAL,
114-B Alima, Bacoor, Cavite

ERRATUM

ON PAGE A13 OF YESTERDAY'S ISSUE, THE COLUMN TITLED "GIFTS," WHICH appeared in Kris-Crossing Mindanao, was wrongly credited to Antonio J. Montalvan II. The column was, in fact, the work of Carlos Isagani T. Zarate. Our apologies. —*ED.*

Your hopes and dreams for your family this Christmas season and beyond?

i hope 4 peace of mind, good health, genuine happiness and abundance of generosity, f0rgiveness & blessings!
—nenneth esplana, 30, irosin, sorsogon

my hopes 4 my family is 4 us 2 be more sensitive 2 each other's needs, despyt and inspyt of, all d hardships and trials..
—loida vilma Mercado, 38, *infanta,quezon*

i hope my dad wud accept me as his son so i cud hug him,
& we celebrate Xmas with him
—FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT B. TONGO, 23, *quezon city*

GENUINE JOY from a sensitive & caring relationship..
—greg s. quimpo, 31, *pasig city*

to build my munting bahay for my family in our province and send my sister to college
—Richard borromeo, 27, *marikina city*

dreams and hopes 4 d family? Stay united and bonded amidst d problems we encounter, and d luv dat binds us wud be stronger 4 life.
bon ascano, 17, makati

I HOPE 4 GOOD HEALTH, PEACE of MIND & PROSPERITY
—francis del moral, 29, *san Fabian, pangasinan*

I dream dat all members of my family wil fulfill der dreams & dat God wil always strengthen our relationship.
—luciano magalgalit jr, 24, *baguio city*

Always in good health & God-centered family.
—Jerome Fernandez, *Quezon city*

This CHRISTMAS SEASON and BEYOND, I picture my family enjoying LIFE to the FULLEST, with all the BLESSINGS..
—NOREEN P. PANERIO, 26, *GENERAL SANTOS city*

MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY
NEW YEAR

i hope dat my family wil b happy dis Xmas simply bcoz we are blessed 2 have each other, healthy in body n spirit
—Cyril Pirante, 23, *Tacurong city*

i hope dat we stay together forever, good health 2 each & every one, & a better future 2 all Filipinos.
—roidemer vecida, 22, daet

For our family and nation? Good jobs, strength and discipline, hard work, perseverance, peace and prosperity, happiness, love and joy. We dream of a better life for our family and country! so that our kababayan will not have to leave their families behind, to look for greener pastures abroad..
—Ana Reynoso, *quezon city*

As the new year begins, what's your message to the politicians?

bagong taon na naman,pwede bang unahin muna kaming mga mamamayan?
—BELINDA MARAVILLA, 37, *LAS PIÑAS*

Politicians, Ask ur self if you really are serving the people who put you in your office.
—richard arriola, 33, *sta.rosa*

simple lang mensahe ko, TULOY NYO LANG PANGUNGURAKOT manhind naman ang karamihan sa mga tao.
—joseph cue, 23, *cotabato city*

wishing my family & d entire FILIPINO family 2 support our (BELOVED!?) Pres. GMA in achieving a better, recognizable, & remarkable progress.
—Jobert morin, 23, *cdo*

to d administration DO GOOD, 2d opposition STOP DESTABILIZING d country!
—artemio soria, 51, *bacoor*

ask urselvs dis question...AM I THE POLITICIAN GOD WANTS ME TO BE?
—tricia pribhdas, 41, *qc*

i want peace and happiness dis Xmas. good governance and unity. a goal 4 our nation.
—dianne mabayo, 36, *tagolan,mis.or.*

my message 2d politicians? May "I" have a happy & prosperous new year!
—a.espiritu, 25, mandaluyong

Tigilan na please ang pangungurakot! Tama na! We want genuine public service, peace, progress and prosperity for the Filipino people, please. :
—Kenneth Dy, *UP Diliman*

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Text us your feedback: inquirer atn name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart) *Assistant Editor* **Tony Bergonia**

PNP says it's a 'jueteng'-free Christmas

CAMP OLIVAS, PAMPANGA—JUETENG WAS missed in Central Luzon during the Christmas holidays, which was rather unusual in a region considered as one of the illegal numbers game's strong territories, as the police reported foiling attempts to resume the underground lottery here.

"The region remains jueteng-free," Chief Supt. Alejandro Lapinid, Philippine National Police director in Central Luzon, told the INQUIRER on Monday.

The so-called no-jueteng status came after the PNP frustrated the revival of the game in Guagua and Magalang towns in Pampanga and Capas town in Tarlac since November, Lapinid said.

A report here showed that a certain Ace Pineda, identified as a nephew of suspected gambling lord Rodolfo "Bong" Pineda, tried running the game in Guagua.

It could not be confirmed if that came with the consent of the elusive elder Pineda.

Chief Inspectors Eliseo Capili of Magalang and Roque Edgardo Paredes III of Guagua had been relieved after raids confirmed guerrilla-styled operations in those towns, a report showed.

"Bookies" operations of the state-run EZ-2 lotto, which is similar to jueteng in that these both use a pair of numbers, was also nipped in Guagua following the arrest there of 18 collectors on Dec. 3.

According to Lapinid, mayors, parish priests and members of civic organizations in Pampanga and Nueva Ecija have issued certifications to prove that the game was "nonexistent" in their areas.

In a report here on Dec. 25, Senior Supt. Policarpio Segubre, Angeles City police chief, said the villages of Sapang Bato, Sta. Teresita, Amsic, Malabanias and Epza Resettlement were "all jueteng-free." He attached the certifications of barangay captains there.

A police source, however, held original copies of used jueteng bet sheets seized from some of those areas.

Said to be a "dry-run" for the resumption of jueteng in Angeles City, the game was ordered stopped by PNP chief Director Gen. Arturo Lomibao, according to a top police official who noted the timing of the revival with the surfacing of former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

Segubre said the 18 suspected bet collectors arrested on Dec. 3 turned out to be "legal EZ-2 employees" who showed their ID cards from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. Copies of those cards were not attached to his report here. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

GOING HOME
Three Olive Ridley turtles race to the sea after laying their eggs at Montemar Beach in Bagac, Bataan. The place has attracted hundreds of turtles that lay their eggs in the protected area where thousands of hatchlings have been released to the sea in the last several months as part of the turtle conservation policy of the resort. This has also attracted tourists to the area. JOE GALVEZ/CONTRIBUTOR

Panay communist rebs vow more antigov't attacks

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—COMMUNIST rebels on Panay Island vowed to launch more attacks against government troops next year.

In an e-mailed statement issued yesterday on the 37th founding anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the Panay Regional Committee said it is gaining more support from the people to launch "crippling blows" against government soldiers.

"The New People's Army (NPA) in Panay will continue to grow, gain strength and deliver more lethal blows and defeats to the troops of this illegitimate regime while the masses will be more emboldened to join the armed struggle," said rebel leader Concha Araneta in the statement.

Araneta claimed the rebels reaped "gains" this year because of its increasing strength.

"... The year 2005 was marked with the resounding ambush against the fascist troops of the 1st Scout Ranger Battalion and the 47th Infantry Battalion in Calinog, Iloilo," said Araneta.

Nine soldiers were killed and 20 others were wounded when New People's Army (NPA) rebels ambushed a convoy of soldiers in Calinog town, Iloilo on Nov. 19.

The attack was considered the deadliest nationwide in a year and the biggest in the Visayas in the last two years.

Araneta said the ambush was successful despite the massive military operations in the countryside because of "widespread support" of the people who provided food, refuge, and information to the rebels.

"The ruthless enemy troops who have unceasingly sowed terror in the hinterland villages ... were ensnared by the very prey they were hunting," said Araneta.

Araneta also cited the growing protests calling for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo in Panay, considered one of the President's bailiwicks in the 2004 elections.

She said they expected more to join the protest actions next year because of the continued decline of the popularity of the President and the worsening economic crisis.

"Another year for the Macapagal-Arroyo regime is a year nearer its collapse. Another year for the (CPP) and the revolutionary movement is another year of whole-rounded growth and honorable victories," said Araneta.

The rebel statement was belittled by Col. Gregorio Fajardo, chief of the Army's Task Force Panay, which is in charge of internal security operations on the island.

Fajardo said the "success" the rebels were claiming only meant harm and hardships to civilians like the destruction of the road in the ambush in Calinog, the destruction of cell sites and the killing of suspected military informers.

"In fact, the rebels are growing hungry and suffering war fatigue because of our continued operations," Fajardo said in a telephone interview.

He said more civilians are reporting to the military and police on rebel activities resulting in the discovery of rebel camps especially in Tapaz town in Capiz, considered a rebel hotbed.

No additional troops are expected on Panay Island next year said Fajardo. But security has been beefed up in "soft targets" like outposts and police stations where there are only a few personnel assigned.

GMA rice gets scarcer as prices increase

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Poor folk who want to keep up with the New Year tradition of stocking on rice to bid prosperity year-round are in for a great disappointment.

In Pampanga's rural and urban public markets, the stocks of GMA rice—grains named after the initials of President Macapagal-Arroyo and sold to the poor by the state-owned National Food Authority—have turned scarcer as 2005 comes to a close, the INQUIRER confirmed from several shoppers, store owners and field visits.

"There's no more rice that's sold for P16 or P18 a kilo," Pilar, a housewife who preferred to be identified by her first name, said as she made the rounds of stalls on Monday.

In all five Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera or NFA-accredited stores that she had gone to at the old public market here, GMA rice went for P20 per kilo.

Called Vicer or Vietnam Rice, the variety came only in five 50-kilo sacks, the stall owner who Pilar last approached said.

The retailer said she could not sell at prices that Pilar haggled for because she bought the rice variety at an "overpriced cost" from a big trader, not directly from the NFA warehouse in Barangay Sindalan here.

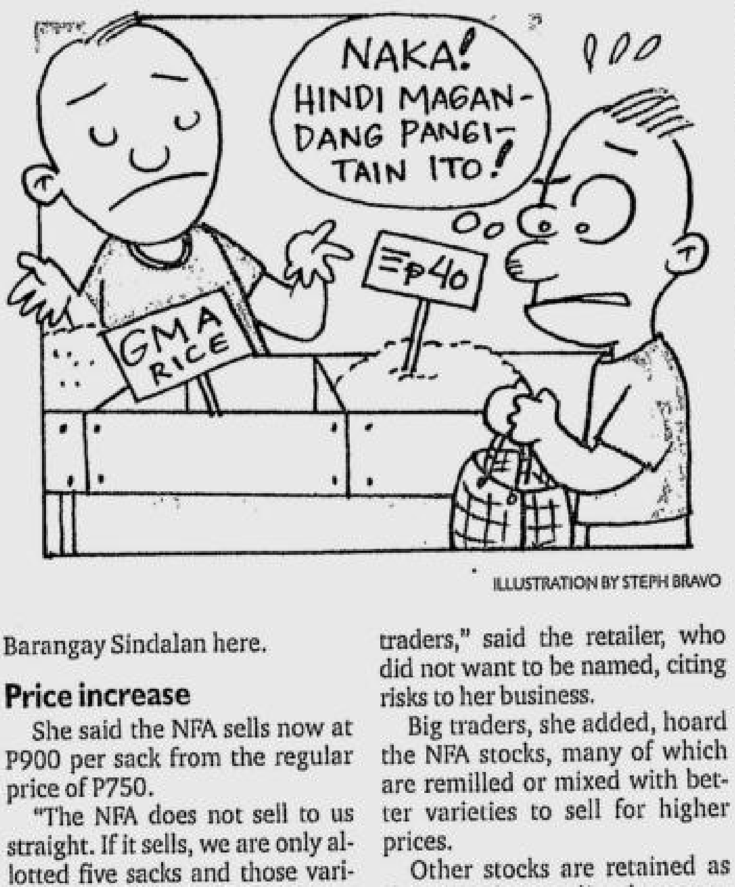

NAKA! HINDI MAGANDANG PANGITAIN ITO!
GMA RICE
₱40

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

Price increase

She said the NFA sells now at P900 per sack from the regular price of P750.

"The NFA does not sell to us straight. If it sells, we are only allotted five sacks and those varieties smell bad. I don't bother to buy anymore because the NFA does not release it at the Sindalan warehouse. We have to go all the way to Sapang Maisac (the agency's depot in Magalang, some 30 km north of here). With only five sacks to buy and at the cost of gasoline now, I have no choice but to buy from big traders," said the retailer, who did not want to be named, citing risks to her business.

Big traders, she added, hoard the NFA stocks, many of which are remilled or mixed with better varieties to sell for higher prices.

Other stocks are retained as these are the supplies that get to the market as GMA rice.

"I'm forced to buy GMA rice at higher prices because I wouldn't have anything to sell to the poor who come buying cheap grains. It's the only variety that they can afford to buy," the retailer said.

She said she has been tempted not to sell government grains anymore because the profit amounts to only P1 per kilo. Profit is even less when unscrupulous traders cheat on gross weight.

Unaffordable

As for Pilar, she settled to buy 10 kilos of the GMA rice but not after lamenting how government has made rice, the basic staple food, unaffordable to the poor. Commercial rice sells from P22 (local variety) to P40 (Jasmine rice).

The retailer has blamed her woes as well as Pilar's on some local NFA officials and leaders of retailers associations.

"They're in cahoots. Some of our leaders who are financed by big traders are able to bring out 200 to 300 sacks at any one time," she said, airing the complaint of other small retailers in other towns in the President's home province. "This happened only in the last four years."

NFA Pampanga Director Elvira Obaña denied irregularities in stocks and prices.

She said the NFA has sold little to the market to allow farmers to sell more locally produced grains after the recent harvest season.

Her agency, she said, normally sells its stocks in June or at the start of what she calls the lean months. "We cannot monopolize the market," she added.

ROUNDUP

Mangyan folk kept off streets

CITY OF CALAPAN—Fewer Mangyans have been observed in the streets here after a series of multisectoral campaign activities was launched by the Church, Mangyan Mission, Kapulungan para sa Lupaing Ninuno, Bangon and Buhid leaders, the National Commission on Indigenous People and local government units. These groups organized programs for the Mangyans in their communities to keep them from going down from the mountains and being exposed to the cold weather and avoid possible exploitation in the lowland. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Call for unity

CITY OF CALAPAN—Concerned residents here urged provincial and city government officials to set aside political differences so they can better provide aid to flood victims. Victor Caballero, a farmer-businessman, told other residents to break their silence and act together to deal with flooding. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

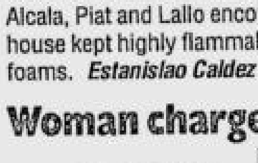
Meeting on floods

CITY OF CALAPAN—A multisectoral task force for relief and rehabilitation of flash-flood victims met at the bishop's residence. Local government units and civil society groups agreed to come up with a calamity report each to be submitted on Dec. 27. The task force will consolidate and use the reports to determine priorities in providing aid. Relief assistance recipients will be categorized according to their resources and how heavily they were affected. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

3 hurt in Tuguegarao fire

TUGUEGARAO CITY—At least three people were hurt in a more than 10-hour fire that gutted a warehouse in Barangay Caggay here on Christmas Eve. Senior Supt. James Andres Melad, Cagayan police director, said the fire that hit the warehouse of the Minolta General Merchandising at about 6:30 a.m. Saturday was contained more than 10 hours later. Melad said security guard Alex Cantilon, fire volunteer Michael Cruz and another unidentified volunteer suffered burns in the fire. City firefighters and those from the towns of Solana, Alcala, Piat and Lallo encountered difficulty in putting out the fire as the warehouse kept highly flammable materials like plastic chairs, tables, beds and foams. *Estanislao Caldez and Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Woman charged with bribery


AY MALI! HULI!

ROXAS CITY—The wife of a suspected drug peddler is facing charges for attempting to bribe two policemen of Roxas police station in exchange for the settlement of her husband's case. The police filed a complaint of violating the Revised Penal Code or Corruption of Public Officials against Penny Tullo at the City Prosecutor's Office on Friday. Penny was arrested after she offered P15,000 to Police Officers 2 Domingo Acepcion and Dexter Paulin in exchange for facilitating the release of her husband Roche, 31, who was detained and charged with allegedly selling illegal drugs. The police recovered one sachet of metamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu from Roche in a buy-bust operation on Dec. 19 on San Roque Street here. The substance weighed 0.052 grams when examined at the Police Crime Laboratory in Iloilo City. *Felipe V. Celino, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Hotel offered for sale

BACOLOD CITY—The owner of the Bacolod Convention Plaza Hotel has offered to sell the hotel for P285 million to the city government to be used as the new city hall. Rafael Lizares Jr., Luxur Realty and Development Corp. chair, told Bacolod Mayor Evelio Leonardia in a letter that the amount was already a "discounted price" as the total value of the 17,141 square-meter property was P369 million. The cost of building a new city hall with the same size as the hotel at today's price, minus the amenities and furnishing existing in the hotel, would reach P230 million (computed at P15,000 per sq/m), he added. Lizares said the hotel is located in front of the city police headquarters on Magsaysay Avenue, which is ideal for a new city hall. Leonardia asked City Administrator Lorendo Dilag, City Hall committee chair, to study the proposal and make a recommendation with reference to their plan to build a new city hall. *Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Workers get bonuses from mayor

MAASIN CITY—The 500 city employees received a pleasant surprise during their Christmas party at the gym last Dec. 22—an incentive bonus of P10,000. Maasin Mayor Damian Mercado and the council members called the employees one by one to the stage and handed down envelopes each containing P10,000 in crisp one thousand peso bills. *Jani Arnaiz, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Gov't agrees to use lahar for road plan

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—THE Bases Conversion Development Authority has agreed to the proposal of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to require the suppliers of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac expressway project (SCTEP) to extract sand in lahar-filled rivers in Bataan, Pampanga and Tarlac.

BCDA president Antonio Rex Chan said the memorandum of agreement for that undertaking has been finalized and scheduled for signing.

The plan came at the early construction stage of the 94.5-km highway being built on a P21-billion loan from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

Ramon Aquino, DPWH Central Luzon director, said his agency pushed the plan to protect dikes and bridges threatened by indiscriminate quarrying.

The dikes were built on loans worth almost P5 billion obtained from the Japanese government after the 1991 eruptions of Mt. Pinatubo.

By confining the scooping of sand to the middle channels of the rivers, the DPWH could also save money on desilting, Aquino said.

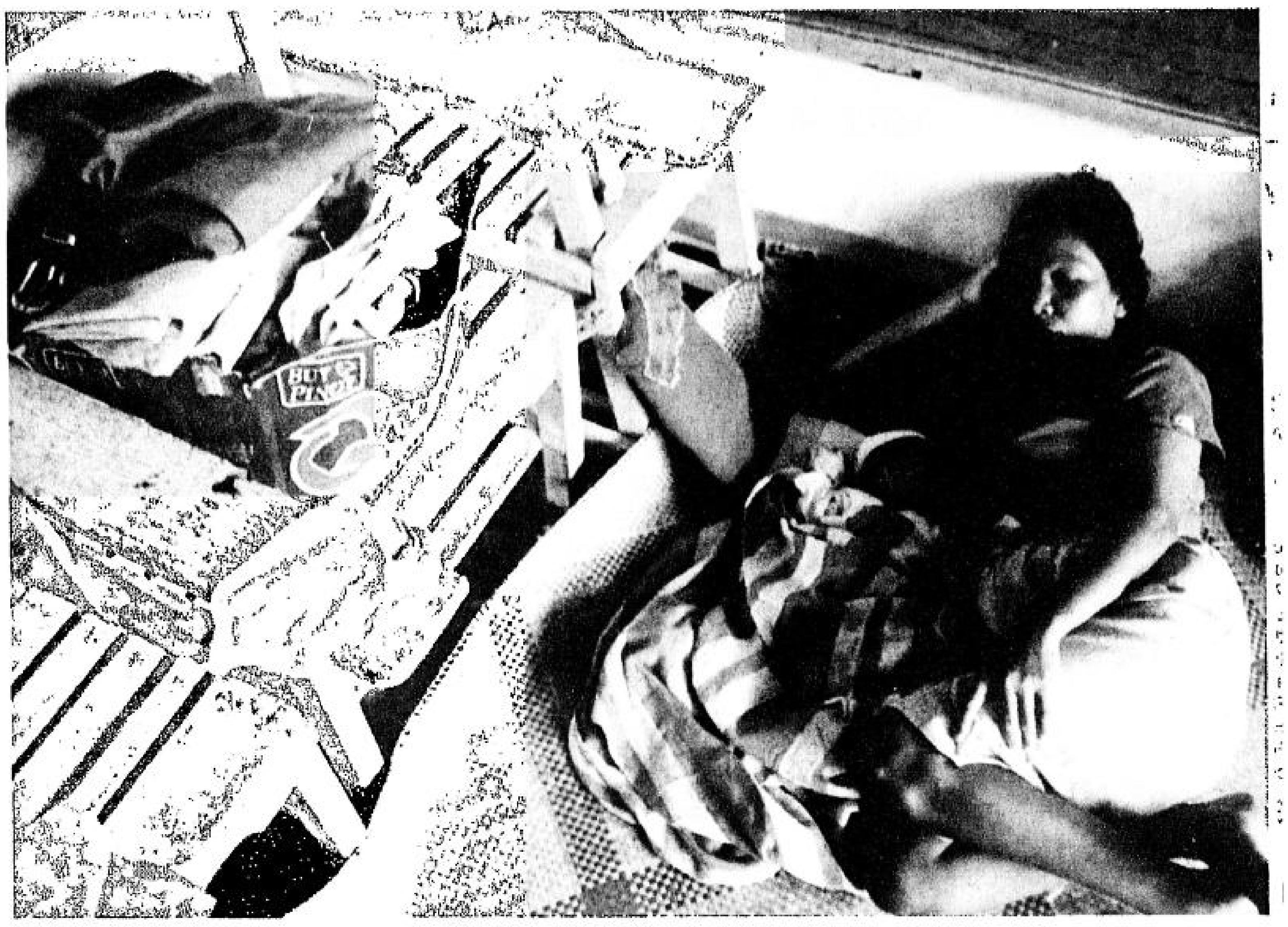
The cleared passages could train the water to flow away from the foot of the public infrastructures.

Quarrying, according to Aquino, would be limited to the rivers of Almasen in Bataan, Pasig-Potrero and Porac-Gumain in Pampanga, and Sacobia-Bamban in Tarlac. The DPWH would identify the sites from which suppliers could haul sand from these rivers.

"What we don't want is for them to be getting sand at the foot of the dikes or near bridges," he said.

Aquino said the plan, endorsed last week by Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., has also gotten the nod of Bataan Gov. Enrique Garcia, Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid and Tarlac Gov. Jose Yap.

The SCTEP needs almost five million cubic meters of filling materials, according to Chan. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*



RESIDENTS of Mindoro spend their holidays in evacuation camps.

REM ZAMORA

Mindoro floods traced to wrong infra project

CITY OF CALAPAN—AS THE WATERS subsided in Calapan, the people are getting a clearer picture of what caused the Bucayao River to overflow, breaking the protection dike and flooding the city and the nearby municipalities of Naujan and Baco.

In a forum aired at a local cable television station, Dr. Manuel Tolentino, a senior property owner near the Bucayao River familiar with the river's history, said that since the last big flood on Dec. 26, 1993, water had diverted from the Mag-asawang Tubig River to the Bucayao River, causing the Bucayao River to overflow.

He added that he had warned the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of this situation before.

Wilfredo Caballero, a farmer and businessman in Calapan, confirmed that the diversion created from the Mag-asawang Tubig River was what caused the Bucayao River to overflow and breach the protection dike that was meant to keep Calapan from being flooded.

Design factor

Hydrologist Marius Agua, provincial consultant to the Task Force Bucayao and Mag-asawang Tubig, said the Bucayao River Protection Dike was designed with a projected maximum volume of rainwater that could come every 50 years or so.

"We could have built a dike with a bigger volume of water projected but that would have cost more," explained Agua as to why the dike was not able to contain the bigger volume of water caused by the monsoon rains.

The Bucayao River Protection Dike has held since it was constructed more than 20 years ago.

Tolentino wondered why the Task Force prioritized the repair of the dike in Bucayao when it already knew that the cause of the flooding was the diversion of water from the Mag-asawang Tubig River.

"Did the task force believe that the earthen dike it constructed can hold off the water coming from two rivers?" he asked.

He suggested that the diversion route from Mag-asawang Tubig should be sealed off.

"If we keep on constructing dikes below, that's useless spending," he added.

Explanations

Willy Goco, a property owner in Bucayao, said they had meetings with the Task Force on flood mitigation where it was explained that a rechanneling of the Bucayao River had to be done to straighten and weaken the flow of the water in the auxiliary dike.

He said they were not opposed to the rechanneling even though it would affect their pieces of property near the river, but they wanted a more comprehensive approach to the problem.

"We asked the National Hydraulic Research and Development Center to do a study on the best way to solve the problem and use the limited resources, but we were not able to obtain the data," Goco added.

Agua stressed that the rechanneling and strengthening project of the Task Force was just complementary to the immediate solution of building earthen dikes, but the long-term solution is to seal off the diversion and build permanent structures.

He said the provincial government will construct a new dike and another one as a second defense as soon as weather permits. Some P8 million was already allotted for this.

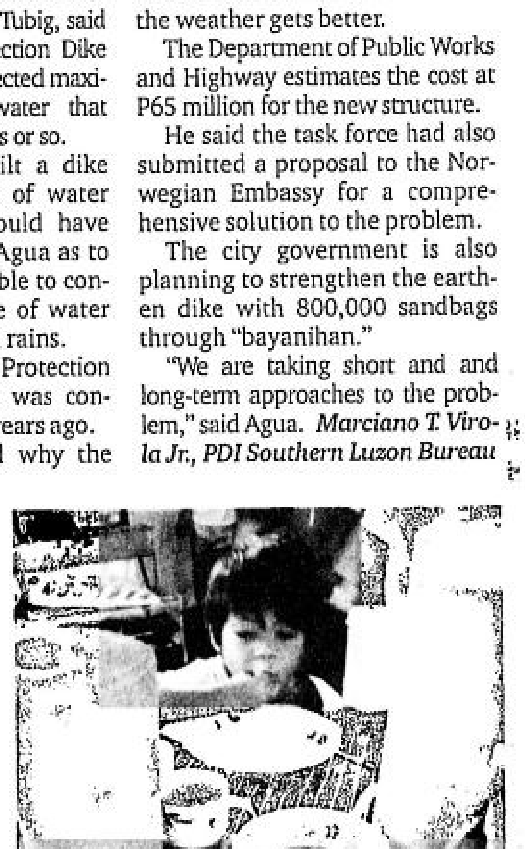
He added that a permanent solution to seal off the diversion will be constructed in 2006 when the weather gets better.

The Department of Public Works and Highway estimates the cost at P65 million for the new structure.

He said the task force had also submitted a proposal to the Norwegian Embassy for a comprehensive solution to the problem.

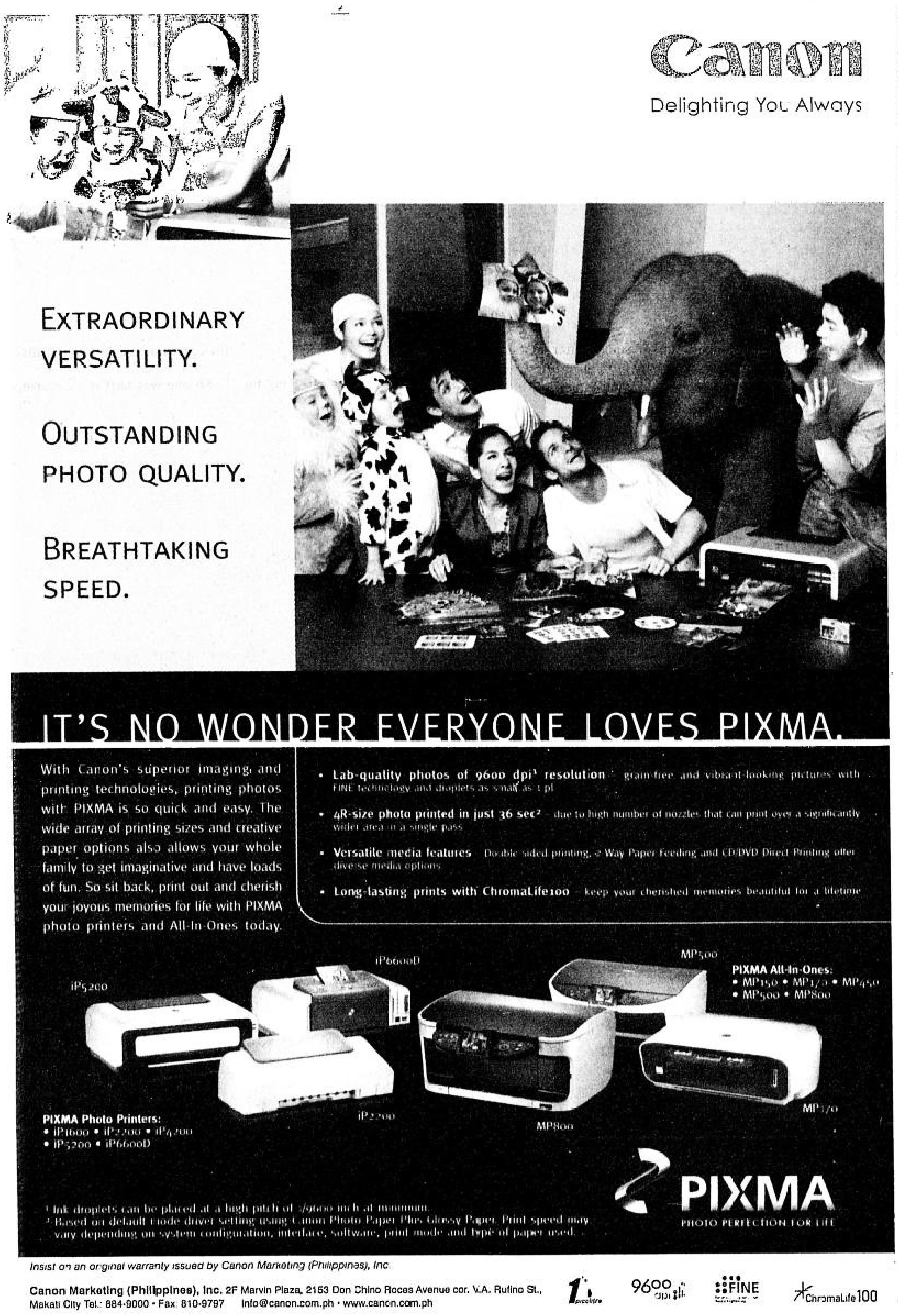
The city government is also planning to strengthen the earthen dike with 800,000 sandbags through "bayanihan."

"We are taking short and and long-term approaches to the problem," said Agua. *Marciano T. Virola Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*



A CHILD takes his meal in an evacuation center for Mindoro residents who fled floodings.

REM ZAMORA



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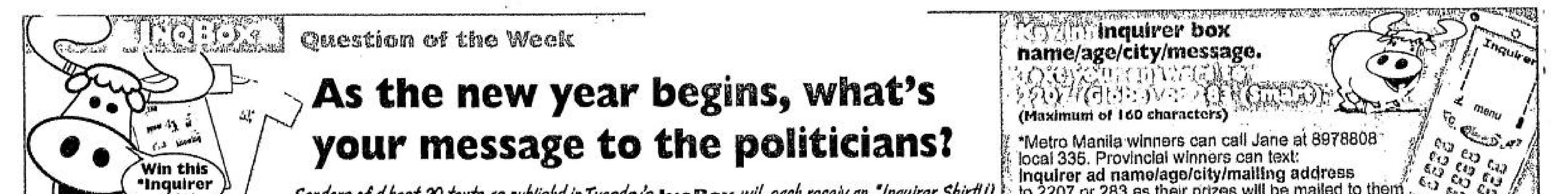

INQBOX Question of the Week

As the new year begins, what's your message to the politicians?

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2 dead in QC 'vintage bomb' explosion

METROBRIEFS

Tragedy on Christmas Day

A REFEREE at the Philippine Basketball League and his brother were allegedly gunned down by a Quezon City policeman on Christmas Day over a traffic altercation in Novaliches, Quezon City. When another brother of the victims heard of the news, however, he suffered a heart attack and died that same day. The suspect, Insp. Michael Sanchez, detailed at the Mobile Patrol Unit of the Quezon City Police District, turned himself in for investigation over the deaths of PBL referee Froilan Jimeno, 36, and his brother Arnold, 28. The brothers were riding on two scooters at 10:55 a.m. along General Luis corner Damong Maliit Streets in Barangay Nagkaisang Nayon when they figured in a traffic accident with a Toyota Revo. Sanchez and his relatives were on board the vehicle. An argument ensued between the Jimenos and Sanchez, leading to the shooting incident, according to a report by PO3 Florencio Escobido. The Jimenos were rushed to the Quezon City General Hospital but died along the way. Upon learning of their deaths, their brother Ferdinand collapsed reportedly because of a heart attack and never regained consciousness at the same hospital, Escobido said. *DJ Yap*

3 suspected thieves caught

AUTO KO SAGOT KO!

THREE suspected thieves spent Christmas in jail after they were caught stealing the side mirrors of vehicles in Makati City on Christmas eve. Charged with theft were Crisanto Cailan, 45, Germain Paulino, 30, and Ruel Adia, 23. They were arrested on Adalla Street, Barangay Guadalupe Viejo after Norberto Casono, a professor, noticed that the side mirrors of his Ford F150 were missing. Casono called the attention of barangay watchmen who immediately started looking for the thieves. As the watchmen and Casono approached a blue jeepney parked nearby, the vehicle suddenly sped off. The watchmen gave chase but as they were closing in, two men jumped off the jeep and ran away, said Insp. Marlon Almoguerra, Makati Police District Theft and Robbery chief. The watchmen caught up with the jeep and arrested Cailan, who was driving the vehicle. His two other accomplices were also caught. Found inside the suspects' jeep were 14 pairs of side mirrors. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

Bigkis Pinoy mission

THE BIGKIS Pinoy Youth, led by its vice president Anthony F. Genuino, treated less fortunate residents of Barangay Olympia, Makati City to free medical consultations, medicine, dental and reflexology services. The medical mission was conducted in cooperation with the Philippine Chinese Charitable Association Inc., (PCCAI) owner and operator of the Chinese General Hospital and Medical Center headed by Dr. James G. Dy, president. In photo are Steve Dy, Robert Yang and McStephen Yapson of the PCCAI giving away reading glasses to the beneficiaries.

Appeals for help

MARK Jay Corsanes, 13, does not want toys this Christmas. All he asks for is financial aid for his long-term medication because he suffers from severe malnutrition. His parents, Marivic and Cesar, can barely make both ends meet for their brood of seven. Interested donors may call 0921-2508454 c/o Merlyn. Meanwhile, Leoncia Villapando, 37, is also appealing for help. She needs money for a kidney stone operation and to cure a goiter problem. Her husband, who is a waiter and the sole breadwinner in the family, cannot afford to buy her the medicine she needs, much less pay for the operation. Those who want to help Leoncia may contact her at 0928-7921987.

By DJ Yap

TWO WORKERS NEVER KNEW what hit them when their crow bar struck a bomb, believed to be of World War II vintage, that immediately went off, killing them instantly and wounding two others yesterday in Quezon City.

The incident happened as construction workers were building their sleeping quarters on their first day at work for the renovation of a Shell gasoline station on Commonwealth Avenue near Philcoa.

The explosion killed project foreman Valeriano Bulado and carpenter Laurencio Villar, police said.

Investigator PO2 Joel Gagaza said it was likely that the bomb hit Villar directly as his body was mutilated.

Jeremias Bulado, Valeriano's brother, and Adonis Reyes, a mason, were also wounded in the blast, investigators said.

Quezon City Police District director Chief Supt. Nicasio Radovan Jr. said that as far as he knew, it was the first time a vintage bomb had exploded in the city.

First time

"It's not the first time that we discovered a vintage bomb. This year, some 80 vintage bombs have been dug up in Quezon City, with about 50 on Gilmore Street alone," he said.

"But this is the first time that a vintage bomb actually exploded in the city," Radovan added.

Agerico de Villa, a member of the University of the Philippines supervisory team for private security, told Radovan that a sociology professor had once identified the area as the former dumping ground of ammunition and bombs by American forces during World War II.

No historical evidence

But De Villa said this was not supported by historical evidence.

PO3 Hernando Vivo of the Quezon City Explosives and Ordinance Division said the bomb likely exploded at the moment of impact with the crow bar.

Bomb squad operatives took samples of fragments and debris from the blast site to determine the type of explosive.

Vivo said construction workers should take note of "strange" sounds. When their tools hit a metal object whenever they start their digging operations, they should stop immediately, he added.

Investment

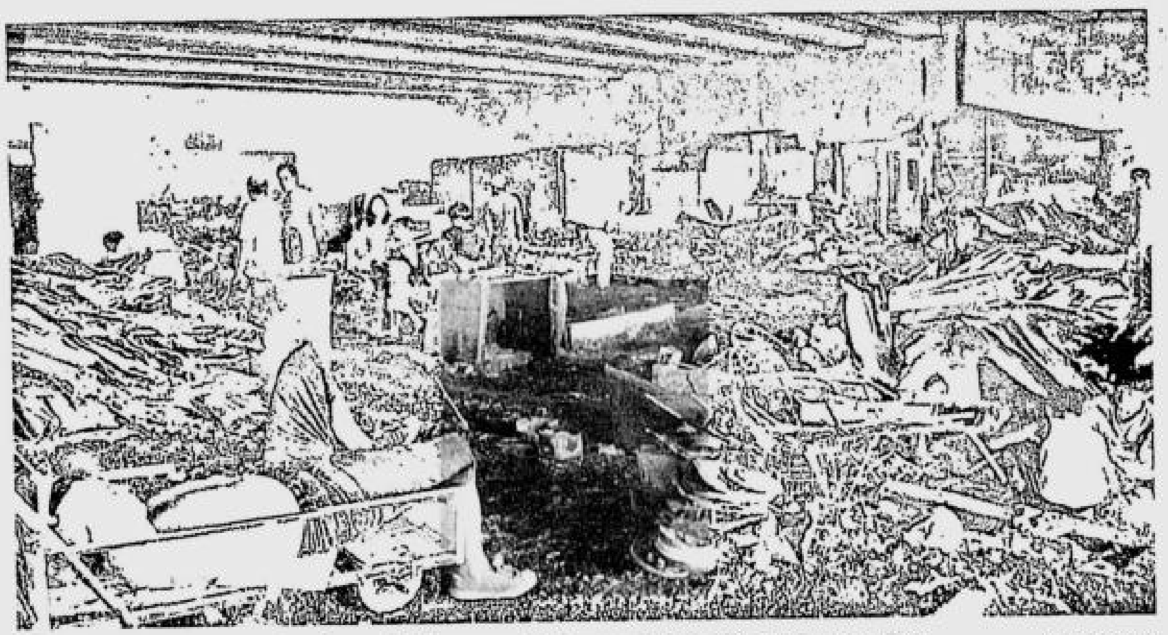
Or better yet, the government or property developers might want to invest in metal detectors to scan the area before starting construction activities to prevent the occurrence of similar incidents, Radovan said.

The victims, who belonged to the Safety-Plus Erectors and Developers Inc., were working on the renovation of the gasoline station when the blast occurred.

Those who were wounded in the incident were taken to the East Avenue Medical Center for treatment, Gagaza said.

Sad yule for 2 victims of QC, Las Piñas fires

By DJ Yap and Jocelyn R. Uy


ASHES are all that remain of over 300 houses which were hit by a fire in Quezon City. JOAN BONDOC

THREE FIRES BROKE OUT IN Metro Manila yesterday, a day after Christmas, leaving two persons dead and another hurt.

In the first incident, a young woman and her daughter perished as a five-hour fire hit a slum area in Project 4, Quezon City at 1:25 a.m.

Jane Abrigo, 26, and her daughter Joanna Maye, 4, were trapped inside their house and suffocated to death, according to Bureau of Fire Protection arson investigators.

A baby identified as Junior Mendoza was hurt while 500 families lost their homes.

The blaze began in the house of Fely Paulino in Area 4, C-5, Barangay Escopa 3, and quickly spread to adjoining houses in the slum area.

The fire destroyed an estimated 300 shanties, made of wood scraps and other light materials, Quezon City fire officials said.

The cause of the fire, which was put out at 6:30 a.m., was still under investigation. Fire officials also could not immediately give an estimate of the amount of damages.

Several hours later, around P5 million worth of property went up in smoke after a four-hour blaze gutted a furniture shop in Las Piñas City.

F01 Agustin Enabe told the INQUIRER that the fire, which started shortly after 3 a.m., broke out in the assembly section of the Georgian Lane Furniture located at 886 Marcos Alvarez Avenue in Barangay Talon Uno.

The shop was owned by a certain Dominic Griffith, said Enabe.

"The shop was razed to the ground. The ceiling caved in," he said. He added that the fire quickly spread because of the presence of combustible materials such as foam, thinner, oil varnish and wood.

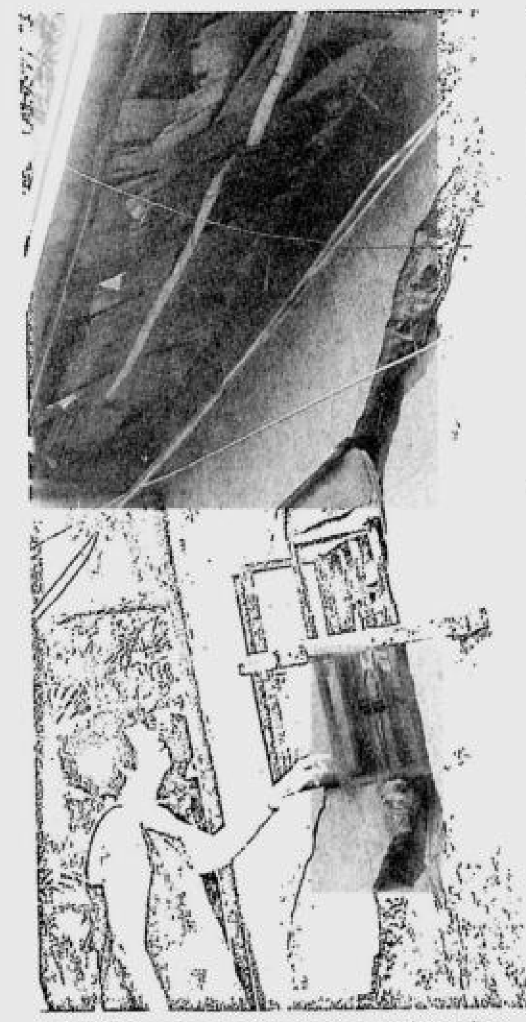
Arson investigator SF03 Noel Consignado has yet to determine the cause of the fire.

In the third incident, another fire broke out in Quezon City, this time in Project 3.

No one was hurt in the blaze that struck a two-story house on Dau St., near Aurora Boulevard, at 12:18 p.m. yesterday.

Arson investigators said the fire started on the second floor but its cause was still not known.

The fire was placed under control by 1:06 p.m.


JUANA Sanchez points to the cracks on her house's walls. RODEL ROTONI

Muntinlupa's 'crooked' village

By Jocelyn R. Uy

FOR A DECADE NOW, SOME RESIDENTS of Muntinlupa City have been living in a crooked world—literally.

Several houses bearing cracks that run like veins on their walls stand askew on the equally warped streets of Sto. Niño Village in Barangay Tunasan. That portion of the village is located on a fault line, residents said.

Juana Sanchez, 57, has to buy two sacks of cement occasionally to patch up cracked walls and floors. Despite her efforts, her house looks as if it would crumble at the slightest shake of the earth. "If we do not mend these cracked walls, our house might give out," Sanchez told the INQUIRER.

Whenever chips of concrete fall from the walls, it meant that the land beneath them was moving, she said. Beyond that, there would be no other sign that there was an ongoing quake.

The earth activity apparently had no effect to the house when it was built in 1984. It was only after six or seven years that cracks started to show up on the house's walls, floors and the fences, she recounted.

"I remember, the cracks became frequent when Mt. Pinatubo erupted in 1991," she added.

However, Barangay Captain Manuel Solomon said the late director of the Philippine Volcanology and Seismology Commission, Raymundo Punongbayan had attributed the problem to the presence of factories in the barangay.

"He explained that the factories pump so much water and create vacuum underneath. The presence of vaccum weakens the soil," he explained.

The hardest thing Sanchez has to endure with the decade-old problem was the flooding inside the house during rainy season. "Because of the cracks, rain water comes into the house. It is not a very pretty sight when it happens," she said.

She also added that when lounging in the living room, it felt like they were always going to fall off their chairs. *"Yung upuan namin parang tataob habang nanood kami ng TV."*

Five years ago, the local government offered to relocate the neighborhood affected by the fault lines.

"But we did not agree because the land offered to us was only small, about 30 square meters or so," she said, pointing out that their home now measured 150 square meters.

She had wanted to spruce up her battered house but with nature's inevitable activity, it was impossible to do so.

Josie Fernandez, who lives in front of Sanchez, said she had to close down her variety store, which was just next to her house, because of the bumpy ground. The store was leaning on its right.

"Staying inside the store made me really dizzy," Fernandez shared.

Meanwhile, just a few blocks away, Leonardo Gomez's house almost sags in the middle. To prevent the house from collapsing, Gomez sealed the main door with concrete. The windows were asymmetric and the doors had to be shaved off so that they could fit the now uneven-shaped door frames. "Before we could not close the doors," Gomez told the INQUIRER.

Like Sanchez's house, Gomez's was also battered by rifts. A huge crack runs through the whole living floor which he now covers with a red carpet. "We want to move out of this house, but we have nowhere else to go," he said. Solomon said the local government gives the affected families discount on their real property tax, but this was not enough to cover maintenance and upkeep costs.

Number coding lifted in Makati

By Tarra V. Quismundo

MAKATI CITY IS NOW ALSO NUMBER CODING-free.

The city's Information and Community Relations Department (ICRD) announced yesterday the suspension of its Unified Vehicular Volume Reduction Program (UVVRP) beginning today until Jan. 1.

"Based on our monitoring in Makati, traffic volume has been low after the Christmas rush. There are not too many vehicles on the road now," said Joey Salgado, ICRD chief.

With the suspension of the local number coding program, Makati motorists can go out on the road any day this week.

Prior to its announcement yesterday, Makati had suspended the UVVRP beginning on Dec. 24 until yesterday, which had all been declared holidays. The city automatically lifts the traffic scheme on holidays.

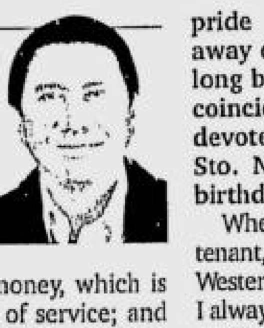
Since Friday, Dec. 30, had also been declared a holiday, the city decided to lift the number coding program beginning today until Dec. 29, the last working days of the year.

Hermenegildo San Miguel, director of Makati's Department of Public Safety, declared the suspension at around 6 a.m. yesterday, Salgado said. The scheme would again be implemented on Monday, Jan. 2.

Robert Barbers and Reynaldo Wycoco: Missions accomplished

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo



I RECEIVED FAVORABLE COMMENTS from many readers on the Dec. 24 column titled "Every day is Christmas." It was even the subject of a homily last Sunday, Christmas Day, according to a friend who attended Mass.

The title was edited. My suggested title was "Make every day Christmas Day."

That Saturday column was also cut short for of lack of space in the Metro page. It advocates generosity and service to one's fellowmen as a means of attaining wealth and success.

I'd like to pick up where that piece was cut to make the column complete:

US Andersen, author of "Three Magic Words," says: "Let not money measure your service. Let your thoughts be always on the further service you can be to your fellows, and you will find their gratitude coming back to you in the form of money; perhaps not from the persons you have served, but return it will for that is the law. Take your satisfactions from service, constantly seek to expand and improve it; take no thought for the money, which is always the result of service; and you will find yourself involved in an abundance that is unshakeable for it comes from the soul."

* * *

Former Sen. Robert Barbers, pride of Mindanao, passed away on Christmas Day after a long bout with cancer. Was it a coincidence that Barbers, a devotee of the Infant Jesus or Sto. Nino, had to die on the birthday of Jesus Christ?

When I covered Barbers as a lieutenant, captain and major at the Western Police District in the 1980s, I always saw him wearing a Sto. Nino medallion on a necklace. "He (Sto. Niño) gives me good fortune, Mon," he told me when I once asked him about the medallion.

Anyway, Barbers' "good fortune" held until he became a senator. He had gone a long way from his days as a Manila policeman. His good fortune made him a Surigao del Norte congressman, secretary of the interior and local government, and then a senator.

His good fortune was responsible for one of his sons becoming a congressman, another son becoming governor of his province, and still another son holding a high government post.

Although he attributes his good fortune to the Sto. Niño, I would also attribute it to good karma. By serving his fellowmen unselfishly, the universe returned the favor by giving him good fortune. Barbers didn't die because his good fortune ran out. He passed away because he had accomplished his mission on earth.

* * *

And so it is that Director Reynaldo "Wykes" Wycoco of the National Bureau of Investigation, a decent law enforcer, passed away because his mission on earth had also come to an end.

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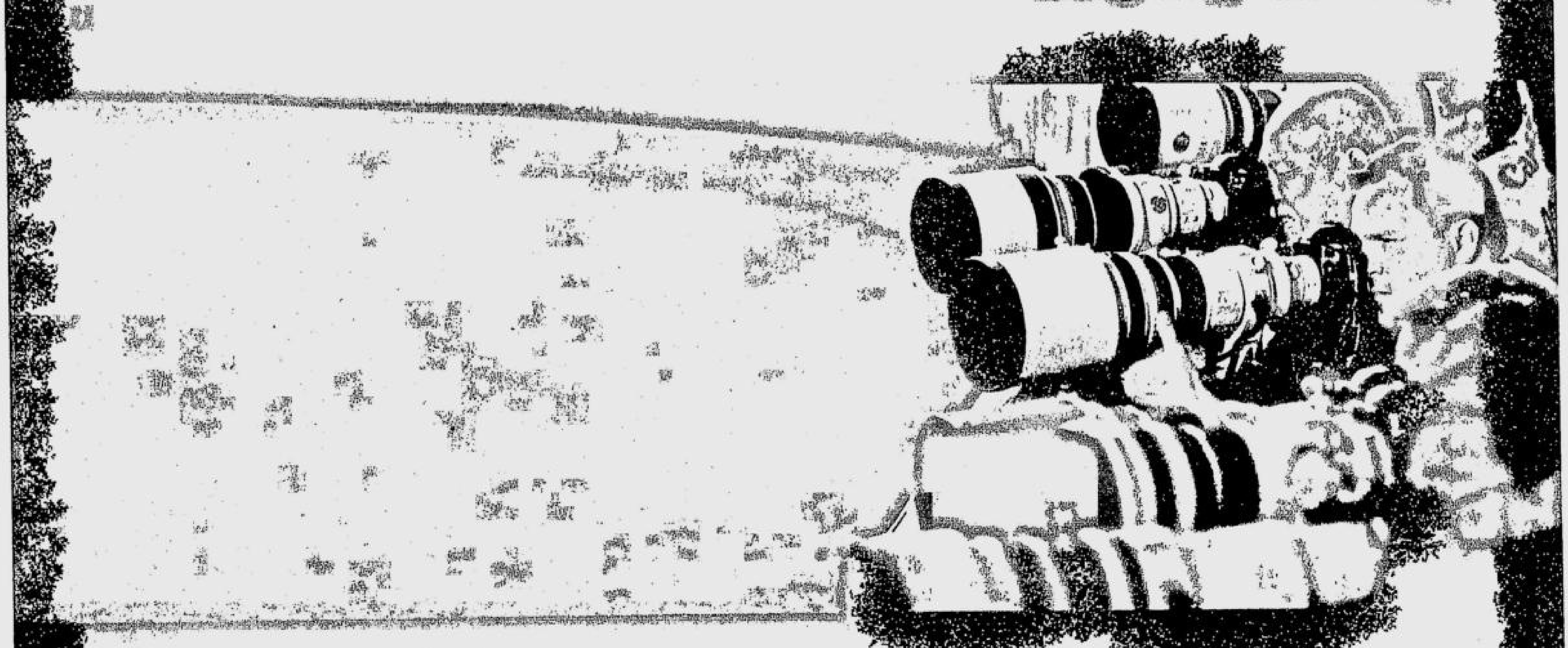

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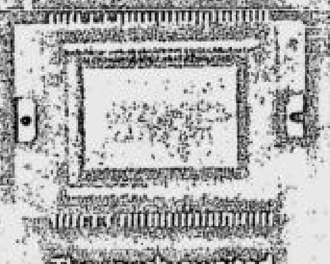

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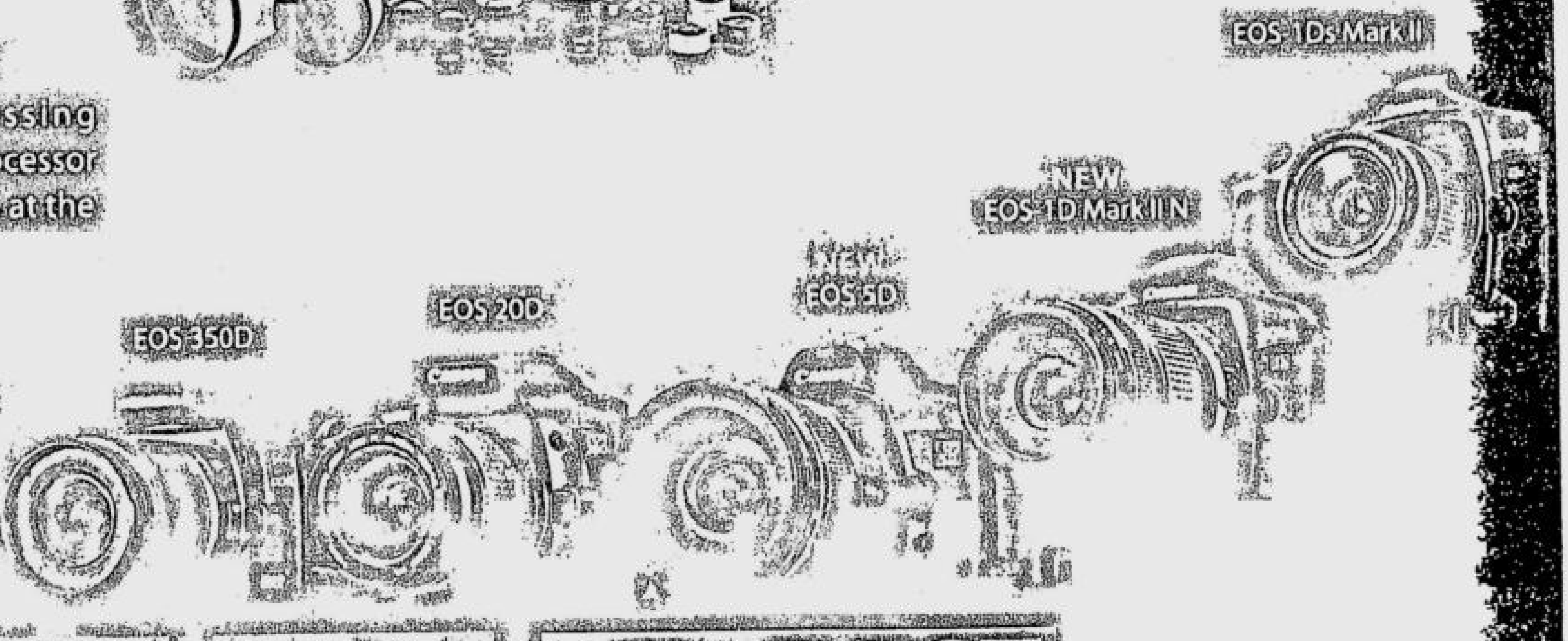

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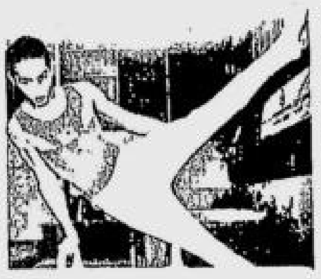


■ Payton turns up heat for Miami /A20

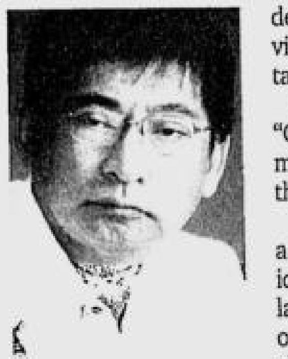
'Revive master plan for RP sports'

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE INEVITABLE DEBATE ON WHICH SPORTS WOULD get slots in the "Chosen 10" has caught fire.

This time the contentious issue concerns the formula to be used in picking the 10 sports—that will be lavishly funded for training and extensive exposure to international competitions—in the Philippines' vigorous drive to win its first ever Olympic gold medal.

Former Philippine Sports Commission chair Philip Ella Juico yesterday warned of a "never-ending" debate over which sports should be chosen from among the 40 national sports associations.



JUICO

Juico said the lack of a master plan will not only spark debates among the NSAs but also make officials of the Philippine Sports Commission at loggerheads with their counterparts in the Philippine Olympic Committee.

Without a general criteria, he said, any decision on the elite list will be viewed as "arbitrary" by certain NSAs or groups.

The POC earlier said the "Chosen 10" will be determined by the Olympic body through a planning session.

But this immediately drew a reaction from POC vice president Rep. Monico Puentevella who batted for the inclusion of all sectors in local sports, including the PSC, in making the final choice.

Juico said debates can be avoided if authorities would only dig up the 1996 master plan for sports created during his term at the agency. It was scrapped after he was replaced in 1998.

"We can save money by following this master plan," said Juico of his program.

In essence, the plan focuses on coming up with a short-term formula to help the country win its first Olympic gold and lays the groundwork for achieving it.

A SHOO-IN on the "Chosen 10" roster is boxing, where two Filipinos—Anthony Villanueva in 1964 and Onyok Velasco in 1996—nearly landed the gold in the Olympics. AP

Juico, now dean in graduate school at La Salle, said the master plan includes, among other things, each NSA's readiness to "self-promote" itself to the masses.

"You can always get people to watch the sport, but to get them into that particular sport is another thing," he said.

"Where do we get the talents to fuel us toward that Olympic gold when people don't know how to play that sport? We need mass-based information.

Juico said the campaign "should not stop with the POC or the PSC coming up with a list."

"We need support from the Neda [National Economic Development Authority] and let it cascade to the regional level down to the barangays," he said.

In 1996, Juico forwarded the plan to the Neda which, he said, would have recommended it for foreign funding except that it was shelved.

"It was landed in the waste basket because anything done by the previous administration (of the PSC) is deemed bad," he lamented.

The master plan has a four-year lifespan and ends after every Olympic year.

"If we follow a certain plan like what Australia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and even Vietnam do, we can avoid these debates," Juico said.

Filipinos off to strong Singapore chess start

PARAGUA: Expected win EDWIN BACASMAS

SINGAPORE—FILIPINO CHESSERS GOT off to strong starts in the opening round of the 2005 Singapore Masters and Challengers International Open Chess Championships at the Hotel Royal in Newton St here Monday.

Grandmaster Mark Paragua, the RP No. 1 and the fourth seed here, turned back Woman International Master Nguyen Pham Le Thao in 31 moves of a Queen's Pawn Opening to lead the RP drive.

Twelve-year-old Wesley So, however, provided the biggest ripple in the young nine-round Swiss tournament by tripping Woman GM Zhao Xue of China.

Other prominent Filipinos winning in the Masters division were former Asian junior champion and 11th seed GM Nelson Mariano II, 12th seed IM Jayson Gonzales and 16th seed IM Richard Bitoon.

Mariano humbled countryman Edmundo Legaspi, Bitoon turned back No. 49 Ravindran Shanmugam of India, while Gonzales, seeking to become the seventh Filipino GM, won convincingly over Viet WIM Dang Bich Ngoc.

Gonzales, an Army man, is aiming to bag his third and final GM norm here.

In the Challengers division, Jenny Mayor beat Timothy Chan of Singapore in 25 moves of a Sicilian Defense.

Alfredo Paez stopped Mathew Ching of Singapore, Leo Daylo Jr. crushed Melodies Sing of Singapore, upcoming Michael Adarlo defeated Singaporean Ian Lee, Janette Arnuco nipped Linson Lim, Ramon Manon-Og subdued Weng Kin Chan of Singapore, Rodolfo Panopio dealt Paer Ching and Rustum Tolentino beat another

FILIPINOS/A19

PSA SIDDAYAO AWARD

Big int'l exploits clinch it for two young golfers

TWO YOUNG, PROMISING GOLFERS MADE it as recipients of the Antonio M. Siddayao Award, joining a long line of honorees to be feted during the PSA (Philippine Sportswriters Association) Awards Night on Jan. 14 at the Manila Pavilion.

Miguel Tabuena and Wolen Superal emerged as hands-down choices for the prestigious award on the strength of their remarkable exploits in international competitions in the year about to end.

The award is named after Antonio M. Siddayao, the acknowledged dean of local sportswriters who died a few years ago.

Tabuena won the 9-10 year division of the fourth UBC Thailand International Junior championship in May and struck again two months later by topping the same class in the annual Chris Riley Junior championship in San Diego, California.

Like Tabuena, Superal also hit it big. In July, he coasted to a wire-to-wire triumph in the 11-12 years division of the Callaway Junior World tournament in San Diego, California.

And Superal won it in grand style, posting a 54-hole aggregate of 21-under-par 201 that went down as the new Junior World record. It's better than the 17-under-par set by another Filipino, Carito Villaroman, in winning the boys' 15-17 class in 1986.

So the duo joined chesser Wesley So (2004) and the Bacolod Girls softball team (2003) in the short but prominent list of winners of the Siddayao Award given to young players.

High on the roster of awardees is Team Philippines, which the 100-member, 56-year-old association unanimously chose as its Athlete of the Year for winning the overall title in the Southeast Asian Games for the first time since joining the meet in 1977.

Gold medalists in the 23rd edition of the SEA Games will be honored along with the other personalities, sponsors and entities who did their share in making 2005 a memorable year in local sports.

The sportswriters have yet to name the winner of the jockey of the year award.

SUPERAL

TABUENA

Three candidates—many-time PSA awardee Patti Dilema, Jessie B. Guce and Jonathan Hernandez—are locked in a close fight for the award.

The list of awardees:

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR—Team Philippines

MAJOR AWARDEES—Alex Pagulayan (billiards), Manny Pacquiao (pro boxing), Arwind Santos (amateur basketball), Eric Menk (pro basketball), Jennifer Rosales (women's golf), Juvic Pagunsan (amateur golf), Harry Tañamor (amateur boxing), Maristela Torres (athletics), Amaya Paz (archery), Miguel Molina (swimming), Shiela Mae Perez (diving), Benjamin Tolentino (rowing), John Baylon (judo), Cecil Mamiit (tennis), Suhod Hakim, (traditional boat racing), Ruperto Aabijon (TBR), Manuel Maya (TBR), Junray Dayumad (TBR), Ricky Sardena (TBR), Rene Catalan (wushu)

SPECIAL CITATIONS: All Filipino gold medalists in the 23rd SEA Games

CITATIONS: San Miguel Corp., First Gentleman Foundation, grandmaster Mark Paragua, golfer Jayvie Agojo, Manila Sports Council, JVC (Victor Company of Japan), boxer Brian Viloria, former POC president Celso Dayrit, PSC Chair Butch Ramirez, Asian Formula 3, Joseph Dumuk, V-League, boxer Boom Boom Bautista, practical shooter Jag Lejano, Eddie Torres, the Philippine Practical Shooting team and equestrienne Toni Leviste.

ANTONIO M. SIDDAYAO AWARD: Wolen Superal, Miguel Tabuena

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Caguioa gets top player of week award

By June Navarro

BETTER KNOWN FOR HIS FIREPOWER, Mark Caguioa also appreciates the value of playing good defense.

The Barangay Ginebra swingman showed it on Christmas Day by sparking the Kings to a 96-89 win over the Alaska Aces that propelled them to a playoff for a semifinal berth.

Besides finishing with 25 points, Caguioa also helped contain Odell Bradley, who had 21 of his 34 points in the third quarter before Caguioa effectively put the cuffs on him.

"He (Caguioa) showed why so many people love him," said Barangay Ginebra coach Siot Tanquingcen. "He didn't only step up in offense but put premium on defense, too."

Chris Porter was simply outstanding for Ginebra with his 29 points and 16 rebounds, while Rodney Santos fired a crucial three-pointer and finished with 18 points in 25 minutes.

But clearly, it was Caguioa's offensive forays and key stops which inspired the Gin Kings most and these made him the hands-down choice for the San Mig Coffee-PBA Press Corps Player of the Week.

The 2001 Rookie of the Year clustered 10 straight points in one decisive stretch while taking care of Bradley on the other side of the floor.

"I can't say enough of Mark. He's a big-time scorer who loves to play in tight situations," said Tanquingcen, whose 2-0 record for the week gave the Kings a 9-7 finish at the end of the classification round of the PBA Fiesta Conference.

MARK Caguioa shines on defense as well against the Alaska Aces.

Ginebra actually finished in a four-way tie with Red Bull, Talk 'N Text and Air21, but the defending champion Gin Kings and the Barako arranged a playoff for the second semifinal slot after wounding up with superior quotients.

The Kings and the Barako decide who get to join the Purefoods Chunkee Giants in the semifinals outright on Jan. 4.

The loser will get the first of two quarterfinal seedings. The second outright quarterfinalist will be disputed by the Phone Pals and the Express.

Mayol steps up training for Trejo

UNDEFEATED ORIENTAL AND PACIFIC BOXing Federation minimumweight champion Rodel Mayol steps up his preparation this week for an all-important 12-round eliminator against Mexican Lorenzo Trejo, the NABF champ, on Jan. 28 at the resort paradise in Cancun, Mexico.

Mayol is currently training at the Flores Gym in Cebu City, sparring against ex-Philippine junior flyweight champion Wyndel Janiola and RP No. 5 flyweight Louie Bantigue.

This week, Mayol is set to visit the ALA Gym as well as the Wakee Salud Gym to spar with RP No. 1 flyweight Jojo Bardon, RP No. 10 light flyweight Ping Tepura, and Jerope Mercado.

Brix Flores, who trains Mayol, said they are set to fly to Japan on Jan. 18, on their way to Mexico to acclimatize to the Mexican weather.

Mayol and Flores will be joined in the trip by Japanese trainer Miura, who owns the Dream Gym where they train every time they are in Japan.

Mayol's Japanese manager, Yasuo Matsuoka, and Matsuoka's wife Genara, are set to rendezvous with the group in Mexico on Jan. 22 after watching the much-awaited Manny Pacquiao-Erik Morales rematch in Las Vegas, Nevada. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

Iggy itch

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

ALL IGGY CLAVECILLA THOUGHT WAS play his game.

And what was his game, or game plan to be exact, for this particular day?

"Play steady golf," he said.

And playing steady golf for Iggy in this the most crucial day of the year for him meant just hitting greens in regulation.

"I was down by just one and I thought just to be on the green all the time might just do it," he said. "Pars could be enough to keep me alive. A birdie or two could win it."

In golf, it's easiest to conceive. It is in the achieving what has been conceived that's hardest.

In this sport, the mind would be always willing but, in most times particularly among duffers like me, the muscles wouldn't be.

But such is the stuff some golfers are made of. Count Iggy as among those with guts that make a difference.

"The Australians and the New Zealanders are always the toughest to beat," said Iggy. "They think that the color of their skin always makes them superior over us."

If there's one guy who doesn't get intimidated, it's Iggy.

"How can I be intimidated when I'm already intimidated?" he'd always joke.

But in this particular day, Iggy Clavecilla was being confronted by ghosts of all kinds as he was to battle for the championship.

This was his second crack at the crown in a tournament called the Asia-Pacific Senior Golf Championships, an annual affair where the best senior golfers from Asia and the Pacific rim countries like Japan, New Zealand and Australia trade shots as fierce as when Tiger Woods and Vijay Singh do battle in the majors.

The tournament was played in October at the Wuyi Fountain's Farm in Tiangmen, China.

The defending champion, Tommy Manotoc, the leader after the first round, had called it quits one-fourth into the second round after going 7-over for the day after seven holes. Tommy said a bad back had hampered his game.

With Tommy out, Iggy suddenly found himself the spearhead of a Philippine team composed of Francis Gaston, Cliff Celdran, Caloy Coscolluela, Rolly Viray and Richie Garcia, with Jun Galindez as delegation head.

The team went on to win the team crown easily, beating Australia by a whopping 18 strokes. But for Iggy to capture the individual title, he had to go through the proverbial wringer.

Down by one shot with one round left, Iggy had to summon not only talent and skill but also all the heart and spunk to overhaul James Grisham, formerly a celebrated Australian professional and a perennial winner of the tournament for 55-and-above.

After playing 14 holes on the last day, Iggy found himself one stroke up on Grisham. Then on the 15th, Iggy made the birdie that mattered most, giving him a 2-shot cushion with three holes left to play.

Displaying true grit never before seen of him, Iggy matched everything that a desperate Grisham had to dish out in the last three holes to secure his 2-shot victory and ensure a Philippine sweep of the two major titles staked.

"It was by far the most stirring, the most memorable victory ever for me," he said. "I did it as a Filipino and I did it for the Filipino."

If Iggy gets to be cited by my colleagues in the PSA Awards next month, why, he richly deserves it.

After all, it is not every day that an elderly warrior like Iggy gets to win honors for the country abroad.

* * *

FASTBREAK. Golfmate Jake and Pat Ayson will host a dinner tonight for balikbayans Tito & Baby Laurel of New York City, Dante & Ching Fernandez of Phoenix, Arizona, and Ofel J. Magturo of Tustin City, California. Of course, Ricky & Malaya Sadiwa will tag along, Ricky & Malaya being the wedding son/daughter of Jake & Pat.

* * *

Send comments to menju@pldtdsl.net

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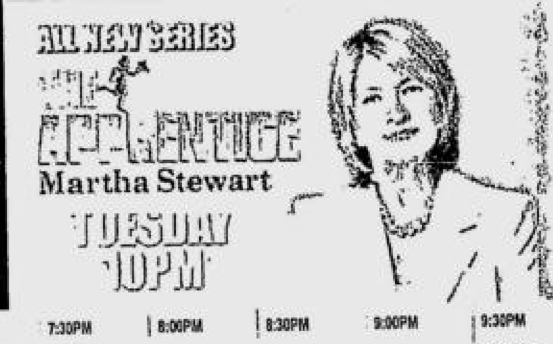
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TUESDAY 10PM

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			Winner TV Shopping		World Pool Masters				Sentro	Mumbai Thrillers	ABC Action Movies				Big News	The Apprentice		ALI	
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins	Meteor Garden Season 2	TV Patrol World	Pilipinas Game KNB?	Mga Anghel Na Walang Langit	Only You	Vietnam Rose	Pinoy Big Brother	Bora			Insider
AXN		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 4)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 4)		The 4400		PSI Factor (Season II)		24		Ripley's Believe It or Not		Worlds Apart		House		Las Vegas	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Powerpuff Girls	Tom & Jerry Show	Accelacracers GP			The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy		Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Machine Robo-Rescue	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinema One		Kung Mawawala Ka Pa				Bagong Buwan				Feng Shui				Lastikman				Magkapatid	
Cinemax		The Addams Family (3:15PM)				Dead in the Water			An Officer And A Gentleman					Devil Winds			Trucks		
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Discovery Channel		Titanic Birth Of A Legend		The Mistresses		Austin Stevens		Stick Fights & Lip Plates		Rides		Human Discovery		Wild Discovery		Deadliest Catch		Mostly True Stories	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Suite Life Of Zack And Cody	Phil Of The Future	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN						Boxing Series Friday Night Fights				English Premier League Highlights		Sportscenter Asia	Pro Billiards '05 Men's Trick Shot Magic		Rewind 2005 Kaohsiung World Pool Champ				Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Good Morning Miami	Knock First	1 Hr. Edited Version Of Today Show		Elimidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	JKX	Simple Life	One Tree Hill		For Love Or Money		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	Catholic Social Teaching	Angelus (3:15 PM)	ABCatholic	Angel Force	Angels Of God	Rosary With Mother Angelica	The Gospel Of John	EWTN Gallery	Lord, Have Mercy	The Journey Home Encore		Council Of Faith	Good Or Evil: Who Decides?	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	Rome Reports	Web Of Faith	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	Date With Tiffany		Dragonball Z	Slam Dunk	Frog Prince	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Sugo	Etheria	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace		Bahay Mo Ba 'To?			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched IV	Mcleod's Daughters IV		HCA The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Who's The Boss	Bewitched IV	The Nanny III	Changi		Mcleod's Daughters IV		To The Ends Of The Earth			Five Days To Midnight		Wire In The Blood
HBO			Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind			As Good As It Gets (5:15 PM)					Mean Girls			Rome Ep 06: Egeria		Rome Ep 07: Pharsalus		The Big Bounce	
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		ME TV					IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	Family Guy	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Beat The Geeks	WWE Bottomline		WWE Afterburn		X-Play	Banzai	Mad TV		Trigger Happy TV	Primetime Glick	South Park	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Ren & Stimpy Adult Party Cartoon	Family Guy	Late Show With David Letterman	
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Passion For Dessert	Second Look		Look For Less	Life & Style		Who's Wedding Is It Anyway?		Road & Track	Back To Basics
MTV Philippines	MTV Screen	Spring Break	Dyes		Punk'D	Pop Inc		MTV Hits				MTV Hits	Get Spotted	TRL		Advance Warning	Pimp My Ride	MTV Hits	VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYX Versions	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	MYXILOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Top Of The Pops	Radio MYX	MYX News	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		Seconds From Disaster		Inside 911		Is It Real?		Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Seconds From Disaster		Is It Real?	
NBN		Value Vision		New Life TV Shopping		Teledyaryo	Dyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo				Pilipinas Ngayon Na!		Bantay OCW With Susan K	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues/What Planet Are You From	Rugrats	Hey Arnold!	My Life As A Teenage Robot/Right On Top	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	Wayside School		All That	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	Drake & Josh	The Fairly OddParents	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Chalkzone	The Wild Thornberrys	The Angry Beavers	The Brothers Garcia
PBO			Pangako Ng Kahapon				Kaprasong Langit				Mga Batang City Jail				Ang Lahat Ng Ito'y Para Sa'yo				Ma'am Turuan Mo Ako
Qtv		Endless Christmas (Natividad Sin Fin)	Striker Hungry Heart	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Momo		Star	Hotelier	All In	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	My Guardian Baby		News On Q	Sana'y Muling Makapiling		Groupee TV	
RPN 9	TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	As Told By Ginger	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Real Gilligan's Island		The Cut		Paradise Hotel		Newswatch Now	Tuesday Night Treat		
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Bmg Video			
Solar Sports		WTA 2005 Gaz de France Stars Belgium					Greatest Classics					Sportsdesk		NBA Game Grizzlies @ Jazz					NBA Inside Stuff
Sports Plus			Get A Grip On Golf	NFL 2005 Chicago @ Green Bay						NBA Game Chicago @ Cleveland					NBA Game Boston @ Seattle				
Star Movies			Harley Davidson & The Marlboro Man (3:45 PM)				The Hand That Rocks The Cradle			The Sin Eater (7:15 PM)				The Alamo				The Whole Ten Yards (11:15PM)	
Star World	Becker	The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Whose Line Is It Anyway?	Angel		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Friends	American Idol Special		Desperate Housewives		Tru Calling		Friends	American Idol Special
Studio 23		Astroboy						Get Backers	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	Andromeda		Smallville (8:20 PM)	[illegible] (9:10 PM)		News Central	Oprah		Just Shoot Me

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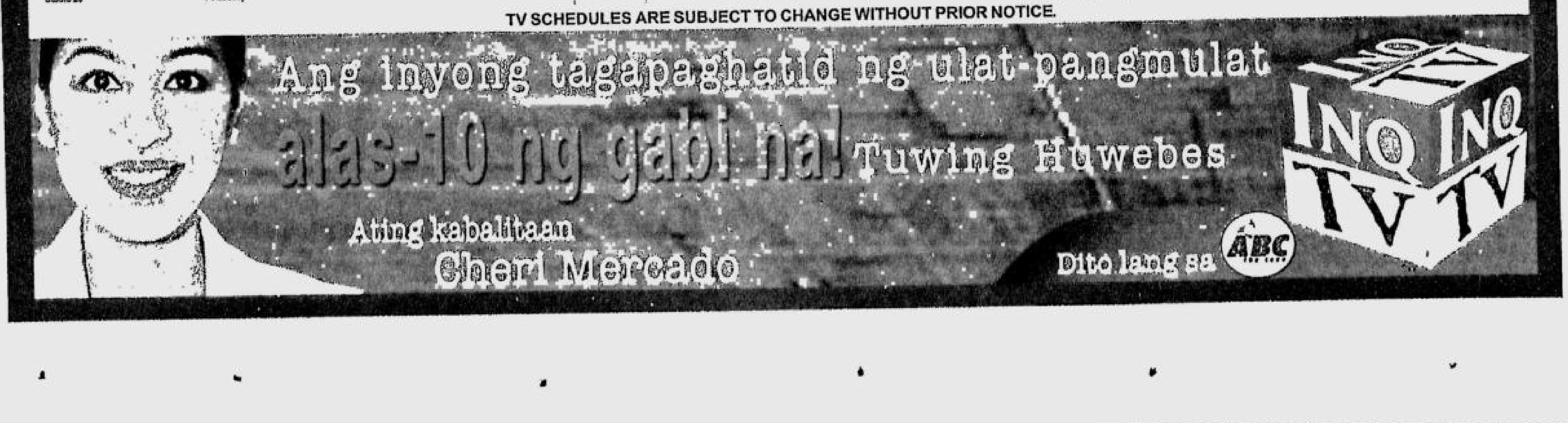

Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
alas-10 ng gabi na! Tuwing Huwebes
Ating kabalitaan Cheri Mercado
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

Avid Lapid fan soars to golden feats

WHEN he was younger, Roel Velasco would pretend to be Lito Lapid.

By Jasmine W. Payo

NOT BAD FOR SOMEONE WHO STARTED out as a fan of former action star and now senator Lito Lapid.

Following the cash windfall he received from the government and private companies, Southeast Asian Games gymnastics hero Roel Ramirez is certainly enjoying the holidays.

And one thing Ramirez likes to laugh about now is how he got hooked into the sport that has given him numerous financial blessings.

"Lito Lapid was my idol," laughed the 23-year-old gymnast, one of the best individual performers in the recent biennial meet.

"When I was younger, I liked tumbling, rolling and jumping," said Ramirez in Filipino. "I would pretend I was Lito Lapid. I liked the feeling of being in mid-air."

But the juvenile game turned out to be a serious sport for Ramirez. And just three weeks ago, he proved it with his impressive medal haul in the 23rd SEA Games held in Manila.

Ramirez captured two gold medals, in the vault and floor exercise events in the artistic gymnastic competitions. The Bicol native also picked up a silver in the high bars and a bronze in the men's team event.

"I've always liked gymnastics because it's different from other sports," said Ramirez. "I've tried many sports—karate, aikido, judo, swimming. But I got more interested in gymnastics. It's exciting and challenging."

And Ramirez was glad that during the Games, more Filipinos finally got to see the national gymnasts in action. But he noted that behind the graceful movements, the sport requires a lot of strength, balance and flexibility.

"Training is very hard," he said. "You have to do it over and over again. But in the actual competitions, sometimes you still make mistakes."

Ramirez, an Education major at the University of the East, said he still feels nervous.

"Of course, there was pressure during the SEA Games," said Ramirez, the first Filipino to win in the Artistic Gymnastics World Cup last February. "But at that time, I tried not to think about getting a medal because I might lose my concentration. I tried thinking it was just regular training."

And he is looking at bigger plans.

"My target this year was the SEA Games, to be on top," he said. "And I was happy with my performance. My next goal now is the Asian Games, then the World Championship and hopefully the Olympics."

And just like his old silver screen idol, he hopes no adversity will stop him.

"Gymnastics gets more challenging as you grow older," said Ramirez. "But as long as I can do it, I will compete."

Bantoc bags rookie plum in Speedfest moto

MOVING UP TO A MORE COMPETITIVE LEVEL, little-known Hermis Bantoc made it to the circle of champions when he captured both the Rookie of the Year and the Novice 125 crown recently in the 2005 Speedfest Motocross Series in Palo Alto, Rizal.

Bantoc, a 41-year-old businessman backed by Flamboyant Construction, Caltex Revtex, GCG Racing Pipes and Sea Palace, bagged the Novice crown in his first year after shifting from the Executive Class.

He only finished fourth in the championship leg but it was enough to give him the title with a total of 197 points in the six-leg series.

Bantoc was victorious in Baguio, Clark and San Pablo City and had two other fourth places in Subic and Batangas.

"Going up against younger and more competitive riders was already a tough task and I never really expected to win the top Rookie award. That's why I'm very happy and very proud of this achievement," said Bantoc.

Actor Jordan Herrera copped runner-up honors with 141 points while Frank Cu was third with 137.

Filipinos off to a big start

From page A17

Singaporean in Jonathan Weng.

NM Marlon Bernardino beat No. 13 IM Enrique Paciencia in 118 moves.

In the Open section, top seed Super GM Zurab Azmaiparashvili of Georgia whipped local star FM Evan Yeo; No. 2 GM Ni Hua of China turned back No. 35 NM Eric Gloria of the Philippines and No. 3 GM Zhang Zhong of China blasted Sebastian Simanjuntak of Indonesia. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

SPORTSWATCH

'Gapo' Mayor's Cup golf set

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—All is set for the 1st Olongapo Mayor's Cup, a one-day golf tournament to raise funds for the city's school children on Thursday at the Subic Bay Golf and Country Club. More than 100 players are expected play. Olongapo City Mayor James "Bong" Gordon Jr. will lead the ceremonial tee off together with SBMA chair Feliciano Salonga, Antonio "Rex" Chan, SBMA director and BCDA vice president for operations, and a visiting Taiwanese governor. Tournament format is System 36. A brand-new Yamaha motorcycle and P50,000 cash donated by Carworld will be given as hole-in-one prizes.

Las Piñas 3-cocker today

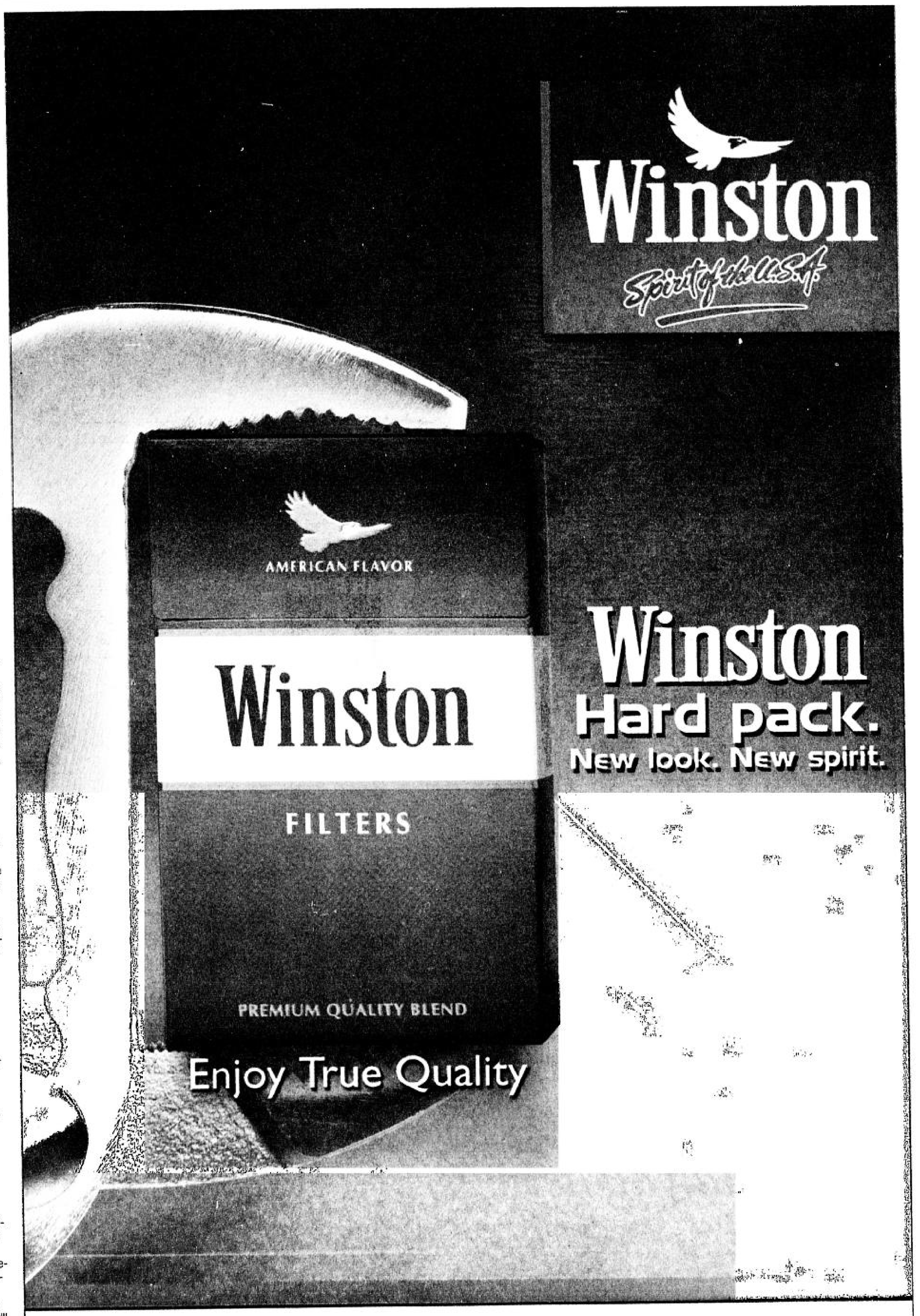
COCKFIGHTING ENTHUSIASTS FROM LAS Piñas, Muntinlupa, Parañaque, Pasay, Cavite, Laguna and Batangas converge tonight at the Las Piñas Coliseum when the special 3-cock derby unfolds at 7 p.m. with about 50 matches on tap. Tonight's hosts are Baldo Perez and Julius Canumay. Entries will be accepted from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. and interested participants may call 873-1040 or 874-3910. The cash prize at stake is P300,000 with an entry fee of P5,500.

GCAP cocker race starts

THE QUEST FOR THE 2006 COCKER OF THE YEAR title starts on Jan. 4 as prominent cockers and breeders belonging to the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) compete in the season-opening 5-cock derby. Eight big 5-cockers will be presented by GCAP, all at the San Juan Coliseum. Exclusive sponsor is Sagupaan Complexor 3000. Other schedules will be on Jan. 25, Feb. 15, March 15 and 22, May 3 and 24 and June 21. The GCAP derbies will serve as basis in selecting the 2006 Cocker of the Year winner, said GCAP stalwart Patrick Antonio.

Daytime derby under way

MORE THAN 80 FIGHTS ARE ON TAP TODAY IN San Juan Coliseum's "Daytime 3-cock derby" beginning at 12 noon. Sponsor is Sagupaan Complexor 3000. Hosted by Rey Cabial, Ledy Espera and Ruel Diaz, the cash pot is P300,000. Entry fee and minimum bet are P5,500 and P3,300, respectively. The entry with the fastest winning time will get a special prize. Meanwhile, the SJC management is also gearing up for the "NCA International 8-cock derby" on Jan. 16, 18 and 20 hosted by Gov. Ito Ynares, the Firefly Group, R. Pineda, Danny Valero and Phil Say. For inquiries, call 725-5369 or 0917-8041691.



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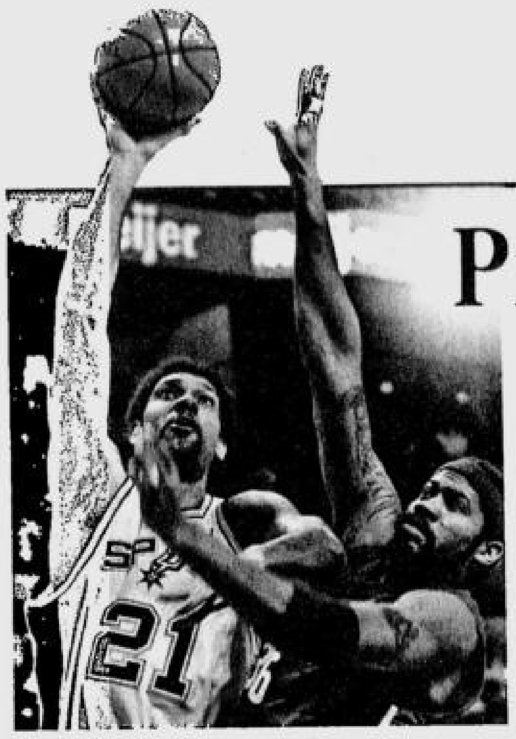
SPORTS



DUNCAN: Unable to save Spurs. AP

Pistons get measure of revenge vs Spurs

AUBURN HILLS, MICHIGAN—CHAUNCEY Billups scored 20 points and grabbed six rebounds to guide the Detroit Pistons to an 85-70 win over the NBA champion San Antonio Spurs on Sunday in a rematch of last year's final.

The Christmas Day clash at the Palace at Auburn Hills was the first meeting between Detroit and San Antonio since the Spurs claimed the title last year and a preview of what many predict will be this season's championship final.

Winners of the last three NBA crowns between them, both the Pistons and Spurs remain among the league's best topping their respective conferences.

The Pistons exacted a small measure of revenge for their finals defeat with a dominating display and extended their winning streak to seven games while improving their record to a league best 22-3.

The surging Pistons have won 13 of their last 14 games and have been almost unbeatable at home with a 10-1 record.

Rasheed Wallace contributed 14 points to the Pistons cause while Ben Wallace ruled the board pulling down a season best 21 rebounds while chipping in with 10 points.

Tony Parker paced the Spurs with 19 points while Tim Duncan was limited to 18 and 11 rebounds.

"It was a big game and we looked forward to it," said Billups. "It's always big when you are playing the best.

"I think we did a pretty good job on Duncan."

The Spurs got the Christmas Day matinee off to a sluggish start trailing 18-8 after the first quarter.

The eight points were all provided by Parker and equaled a team record for fewest scored in a quarter.

Behind Duncan, San Antonio found some rhythm in the second quarter playing the Pistons even but still trailed by 10 at the intermission.

The Spurs continued to rally in the third and trimmed the deficit to 57-53 entering the final period.

But the NBA champions would get no closer, slumping to just their third defeat in eight games. *Reuters*

CHRISTMAS DAY FEATURE

Payton turns up heat for Miami

MIAMI, FLORIDA—GARY PAYton scored a season high-tying 21 points and hounded Kobe Bryant into missing a tying 3-point attempt in the waning seconds as the Miami Heat edged the Los Angeles Lakers, 97-92.

PAYTON REUTERS

Miami trailed, 92-91, before Payton—who had been averaging just 8.9 points this season—drilled a 3-pointer from the left corner with 1:05 remaining in Sunday's NBA game.

"We didn't bring him here on a gurney," Heat coach Pat Riley said of Payton. "This is not a quick trip to South Beach. He still has the ability to make some big plays and at the same time, he did a great job defending Kobe Bryant."

After Lakers forward Lamar Odom missed a 3-pointer, Miami's Dwyane Wade misfired on a rushed baseline jumper as the shot clock was expiring.

Heat forward Udonis Haslem missed a follow shot, but he deflected the rebound off Lakers guard Smush Parker out of bounds with 12.5 seconds left.

Less than a second later, Wade only could split a pair of free throws, giving the Lakers a chance to tie the game.

But Payton—nicknamed "The Glove" for his tenacious defense—forced Bryant into an off-balance shot from well beyond the top of the arc, and the ball barely grazed the front of the rim. Bryant scored 37 points but went 0-of-8 from the arc.

James Posey grabbed the rebound, was fouled with 2.1 seconds left and sank two free throws to ice the game.

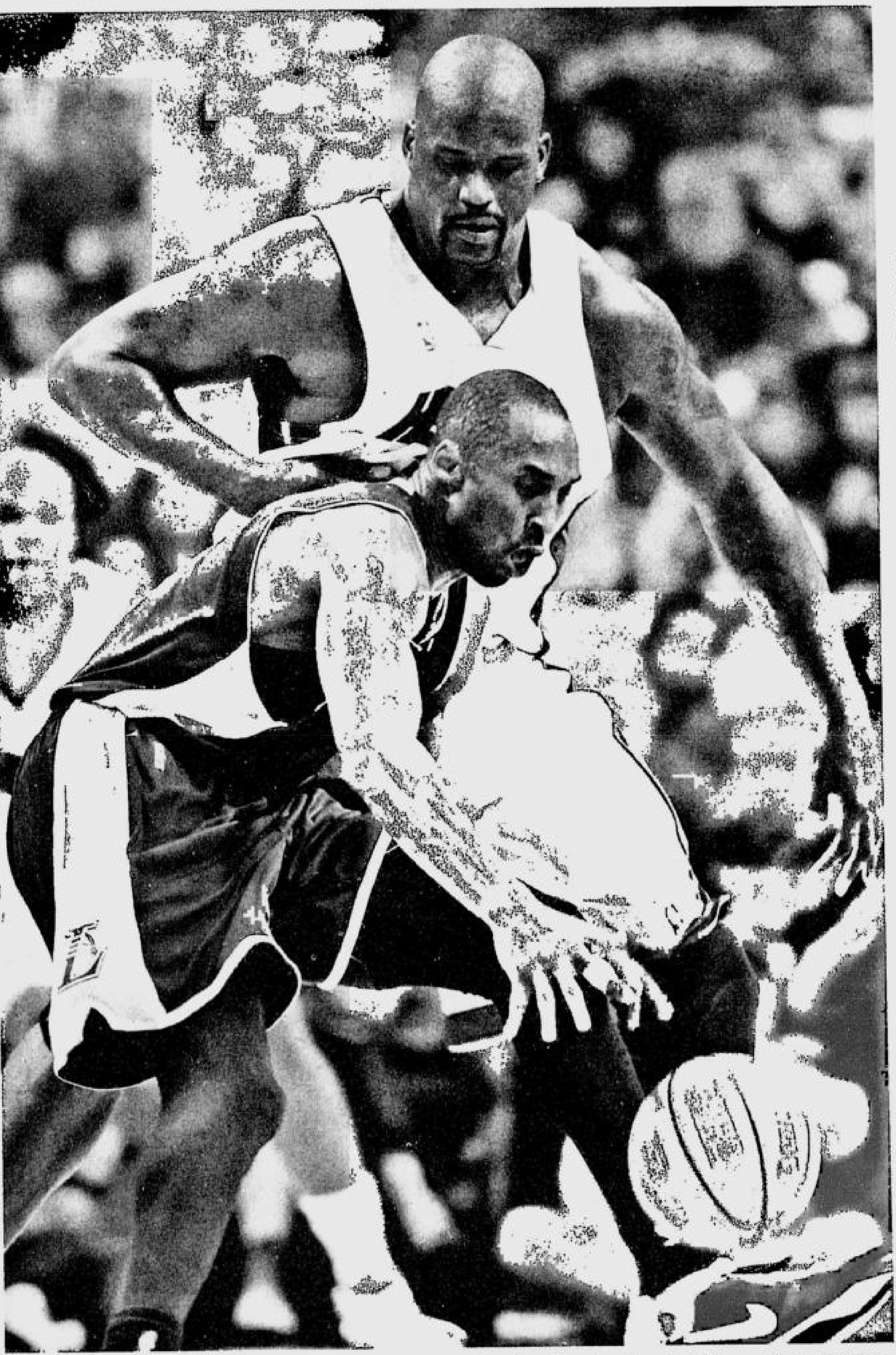
"I'm just proud the Miami Heat won," Payton said.

Said Lakers coach Phil Jackson of Bryant, "It was his legs and his foul shots that eventually cost us. We were definitely disappointed in the missed foul shots."

Shaquille O'Neal, who ignored his former Laker teammate and nemesis Bryant before the opening tip, collected 18 points and 17 rebounds. Wade shook off early foul trouble to score 18 points but shot just 5-of-15 from the field and 8-of-13 from the line.

After the game, Odom and Payton yapped at each other near midcourt.

"I don't think Shaq really worries about it," Payton said of O'Neal's tenuous relationship with Bryant. "I think he wants to play well. It's past him now. I don't think he thinks about him and Kobe anymore. I don't think Kobe thinks about it. That's over." *AFP*



AS MANY heroes as there were in the Yuletide clash between Miami and Los Angeles, a lot of the spotlight still fell on the Heat's Shaquille O'Neal (back) and the Lakers' Kobe Bryant. The two old teammates and now cold rivals had nothing to say to each other before tip-off, with O'Neal not even casting a glance toward Bryant's direction. AP

'He's being The Glove we know'

MIAMI—THEY ARE MORE THAN CHRISTMAS showdowns now, more like ferocious one-game playoff battles between the Lakers and Miami Heat, with the words exchanged leaving almost as bitter feelings as the close losses.

For the third time since trading away Shaquille O'Neal, the Lakers lost to the Heat, faltering in the final minute Sunday and watching a potential tying 3-pointer by Kobe Bryant come up short with 2.9 seconds left.

The final score was 97-92 at American Airlines Arena, but Lakers forward Lamar Odom had a parting shot to send afterward. It was directed at former Lakers guard Gary Payton, who spent much of the afternoon in Odom's ear.

Odom, rarely agitated, called Payton "extremely disrespectful" and suggested the notorious trash-talker watch "how he talks to other men."

"It's dudes like that, that's why things happen off the court between players and their friends and things like that," Odom said, later adding, "His mouth is horrible, atrocious."

Said Payton: "You know the young ones that got the hot tempers."

Odom's words were sure to give this saga involving Bryant, O'Neal, Phil Jackson and Pat Riley another subplot, not that it was necessary. The game itself was extraordinary from start to finish, with Bryant playing every minute of the second half and 44:17 in all.

Bryant finished with 37 points on 12-of-30 shooting but missed all eight 3-pointers he took and seemed to wear down in the fourth quarter.

The Lakers couldn't take control as Dwyane Wade spent nearly the entire third quarter on the bench after picking up his fourth foul.

It all set up a furious finish, with the Lakers taking a 92-91 lead after Odom made one of two free throws with 1:29 left.

At the other end, James Posey missed a 3-pointer for the Heat, but O'Neal pulled down the rebound and then dumped the ball to an open Payton for a 3-pointer.

Payton tormented the Lakers throughout the game and finished with a team-high 21 points, making 9 of 11 shots. He also guarded Bryant, 10 years his junior, for much of the afternoon with Wade in foul trouble.

"Gary has that in him," O'Neal said. "He was out there playing and talking. He was being 'The Glove' that we all know."

With the Lakers needing a basket, Odom missed a wide-open, go-ahead 3-pointer with 41.9 seconds left.

"A shot was missed because a shot was missed," Odom said. "Not because (Payton) was talking or because I'm thinking about him." New York Times News Service

No handicap here: Israeli is world's top blind golfer

CAESAREA, ISRAEL—THE BALL EXPLODES off Zohar Sharon's club and flies into the distance. Sharon can't see it, but he knows it's a good one and he flashes a big smile. Two strokes later, he has a birdie.

With the help of a demanding coach, determined caddie and dedicated dog, Sharon has earned an unlikely title—the world's best blind golfer.

Thousands of blind people around the world play golf, but only about a hundred play competitively. Over the past two years, Sharon has dominated them all.

On Nov. 14, he made headlines at home with a hole-in-one on the 15th hole at the Caeserea Golf Club, Israel's only 18-hole course. It was the latest in a string of achievements for the 53-year-old Sharon, who was blinded in the army more than 25 years ago.

Since 2003, he's won international blind golfers' tournaments in Scotland, Australia the United States and Canada, where he sank his first eagle at the Ontario Visually Impaired Golfer's championship in August. And he's beaten a slew of sighted golfers, too.

Sharon may have lost his eyesight, but not his sense of humor. He described himself as "the world's greatest golf player at night."

"I want every seeing person to have their legs shake with fear a little when they come play a round with me," he added.

Then Sharon turned serious. Golf kept him alive, he said, rescuing him from severe depression.

"I enjoy golf more than a seeing man, a lot more," he said. "The grass is always green to me. The trees are always beautiful. But golf is also therapeutic for me. I try, for just one moment, not to be blind."

Out on the grass, swinging his arms and spinning around carelessly, he said he was free. It's the one place he doesn't need to worry about bumping into anything, he said, and it keeps his mind engrossed.

"It doesn't give me one minute to think about my situation," he said.

His ordeal began nearly 30 years ago while in the Israeli military. He was a sniper in a paratrooper unit when a fellow soldier accidentally sprayed a chemical in his face. A series of complicated operations followed, but his eyesight slowly deteriorated until he became completely blind at 28.

"Everything I had before fell apart," he said. "All of a sudden you are nothing, a 3-year-old is more productive than you. You have to rebuild something from what is left. You have to understand what it is you want to do with your life."

For Sharon, the trick was to stay busy. He first turned to painting and sculpting and then became a physical therapist. When he was going through a divorce, his lawyer introduced him to golf. He tried it for a couple of years but quit because he said it was too hard.

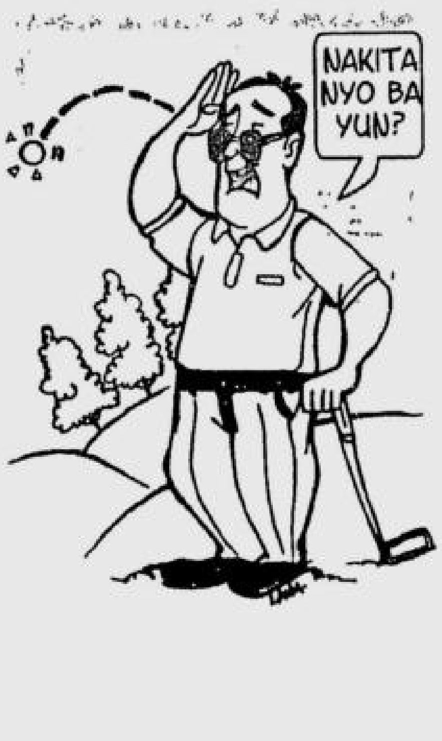
After a 10-year absence, he returned to the golf course four years ago.

Sharon's coach is Ricardo Cordoba-Core, a sports psychologist from Bolivia. He trained Sharon from scratch, focusing on coordination and teaching him to visualize each shot. It was months before he even let Sharon hold a club.

Cordoba came up with quirky techniques for Sharon to develop his swing. He had him sweep the floor at home, using the broom as if it were a club.

At times, he turns Sharon's handicap into an advantage. Cordoba said many golfers became anxious when faced with the sight of bunkers and water traps.

"I just don't tell him about it," he said, with a smirk. *AP*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Editor Emmie G. Velarde

'Shall We Dance?'

REVIEW

The new program goes a step further than 'Eezy Dancing'

By Marra PL Lanot
Contributor

TELEVISION PRESENTS A SURFEIT OF HIP-hop and disco line dancing. Sometimes a performance is all splits, aerobics, and acrobatic stunts. And now, in are the flamenco, belly dancing, and striptease.

"Shall We Dance? The Celebrity Dance Challenge" on ABC 5, which airs Sundays at 9 p.m., is refreshing. In the new show, celebrities learn ballroom dancing for the first time. Each star is paired with a professional dance instructor, or DI. A pair is eliminated each week. Monthly finalists will vie for the grand prize at the end of the year.

The first four contestants were actor Gardo Verzosa and Philippine National Dance Sport finalist Jennylyn Manansala; boxer Onyok Velasco and belly-dancing instructor and VIP dancer Ana Rodalin Palma; Viva Hot Babe JC Parker and Norwille Damasin of Davao; and Angelu de Leon and 2004 Hong Kong International Professional Dance Sport Council champ Michael Gualvez.

Face-off

In the recently concluded season, JC Parker and Norwille Damasin faced Angelu de Leon and Michael Gualvez. Angelu and Michael got the highest rates on technical proficiency, timing and rhythm, execution, creativity and uniqueness, and overall impact—or the so-called X factor. The judges' scores were added to that of the studio audience, which was selected by ABC 5.

The judges—actor and stage director Audie Gemora, choreographer Maribeth Bichara, and Edna Ledesma, grand prize winner in the Latin Dance Senior Category in Blackpool, England—certainly know their business. Maribeth Bichara is the most sensible of the three, focusing on teamwork—whether the DI adjusts to the partner and whether the star looks like she or he follows or leads.

Aside from meeting the judges' criteria, Angelu and Michael displayed a high energy level, audacity, and rapport. They sang the song while dancing, smiled despite missteps, breezed through their numbers like they were singin' in the rain.

Runner-up pair JC Parker and Norwille Damasin were interesting, too. JC Parker, admitted, though, that she and her DI had not practiced diligently. In spite of their lively jive, JC often had her eyes glued to the floor, looking like she's memorizing her steps, afraid to err.

'SHALL'/ A2-2

31st METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

(INQUIRER Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival is ongoing. This is one of three entries that open on Jan. 1.)

'Blue Moon'

Stars Christopher de Leon, Dennis Trillo, Boots Anson-Roa, Eddie Garcia, Jennylyn Mercado, Mark Herras, Pauleen Luna, Polo Ravales, Reggie Curley, Tintin Bersola Babao, Vangie Labalan, Tin Arnaldo, Pinky Amador, Janna Victoria
Directed by Joel Lamangan

BASED on the Palanca Award winning screenplay of US-based Alan Tijamo, this song-driven movie is about an old man's search for his one true love made more complicated by the fact that the two women in his life are both named Corazon.

Manuel (Garcia), 80 something, is dying, and he wants to spend his last days looking for the right Corazon and dance with her one last time to the tune of "Blue Moon."

His search takes him to Baguio, La Union, Bicol, Albay where he touches the lives of people who have their own love stories to tell.

A feel-good movie about love, life, betrayal and redemption, "Blue Moon" almost did not make it to the Metro Manila Film Festival.

Thanks to the "power of prayer," as producer Lily Monteverde put it, the MMFF committee gave her a second chance to submit the movie for the second batch of film fest movies.

Like Manuel's tenacious search for Corazon, Monteverde was determined to have this film exhibited during the festival.

"'Blue Moon' is a beautiful movie that deserves a festival run," she said. *Nini Valera*

POWER PLANT
CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41 DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

ENTENG KABISOTE: THE LEGEND CONTINUES GP 12:50,3:10,5:30, 7:50,10:10	MULAWIN GP 12:15,2:40,5:05, 7:30,9:55	TERRORIST HUNTER PG13 12:10,2:30,4:50, 7:10,9:30
KUTOB PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30, 7:50,10:10	SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K4 PG13 12:55,3:15,5:35, 7:55,10:15	EXODUS: TALES FROM THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM GP 12:40,3:00,5:20, 7:40,10:00

SCREENING SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR VERIFICATION CALL 898 1440-41.

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3: Exodus 4: Shake, Rattle & Roll 5: Ako, Legal Wife	1: Ako, Legal Wife 2: Enteng Kabisote II 3: Terrorists Hunter 4: Shake, Rattle & Roll	1: Enteng Kabisote II 2: Rental Reservation

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SHANG CINEPLEX
① ENTENG KABISOTE 2
MTRCB GP
12 20, 2.45, 5.10, 7.35, 10:00
② MULAWIN THE MOVIE
MTRCB GP
12 00, 2.30, 5.00, 7.30, 10:00
③ TERRORIST HUNTER
MTRCB PG-13
11.50, 2.15, 4.40, 7:05, 9:30
④ KUTOB
MTRCB PG-13
12 20, 2.45, 5:10, 7.35, 10.00
PREMIERE THEATRE (CLOSED)
Movies and schedules are subject to change without prior notice
Catch the Cineplex Special
Watch the 2005 Metro Manila Film Festival starting December 26, 2005 at the Shang Cineplex for only P120.00
Regular Ticket Price
Cinemas 1 to 4 - P150
Premiere Theatre - P295 (includes unlimited popcorn and beverage)
(except for blockbuster)
Call 633-7851, loc. 171 or 633-2227 / 633-4736 for more details
Shangri-La Plaza

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CINEMA 1 AKO LEGAL WIFE PG13 11:30, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50
CINEMA 2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2 - GP 11:30, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
PROMENADE GREENHILLS
...a dinotertainment for all!
NOW SHOWING
CINEMA 3 TERRORIST HUNTER - PG13 11:30, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50
CINEMA 4 KUTOB PG13 11:30, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50
CINEMA 5 EXODUS - PG13 10:40, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.
MUSIC MUSEUM
January 27, 2005 JED MADELA 9PM
February 3 & 4 NINA&NYOY 9PM
FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS. CALL : 721-6726 OR 721-0635

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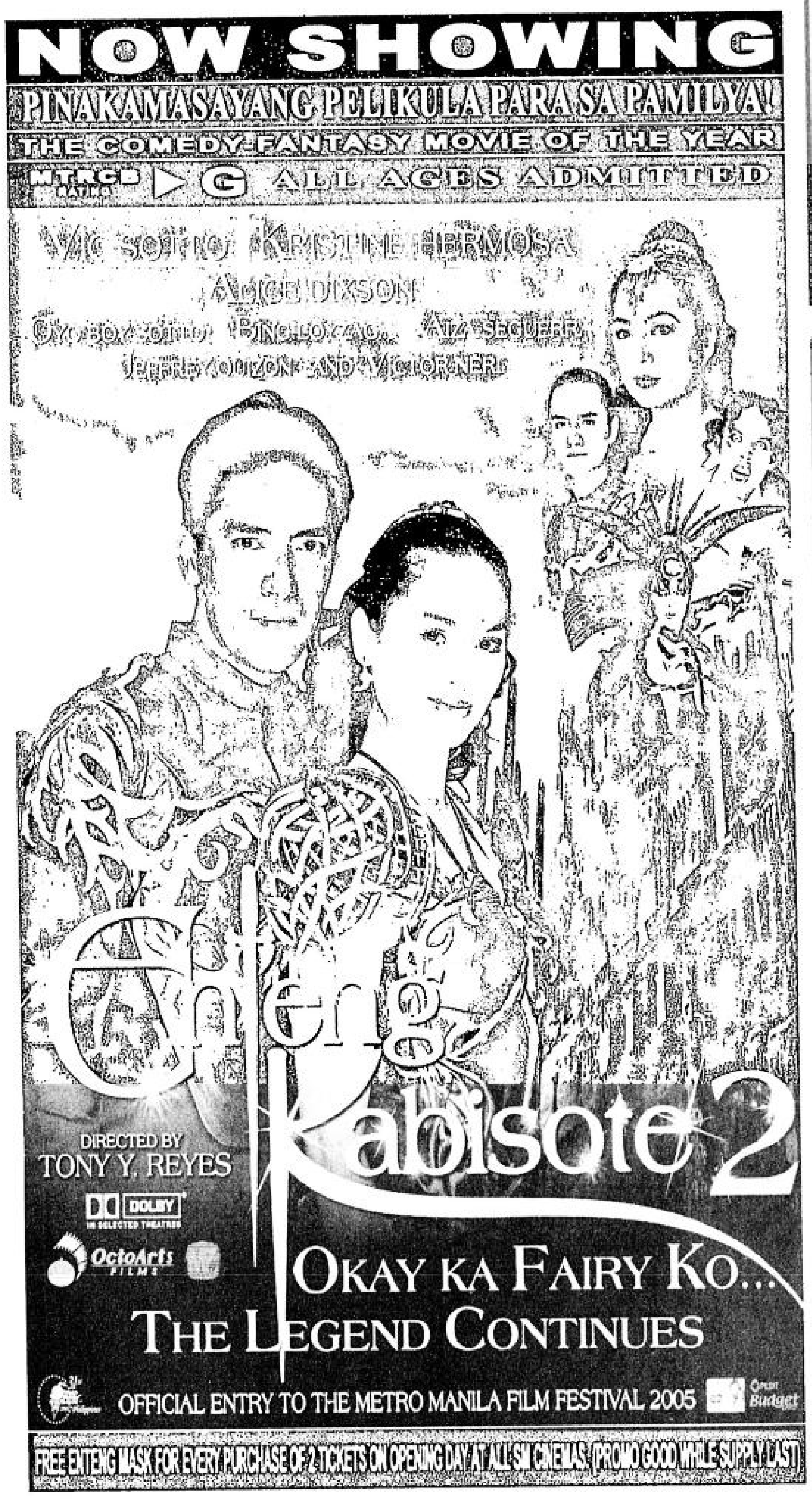
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave. (C-5) Quezon City
For inquiries, call:
687-6963
GUARANTEED SEATS
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1	AKO LEGAL WIFE	12:05, 2:35, 5:05, 7:35, 10:05	PG-13
2	ENTENG KABISOTE 2	1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00	GP
3	TERRORIST HUNTER	12:50, 3:15, 5:40, 8:05, 10:30	PG-13
4	KUTOB	1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00	PG-13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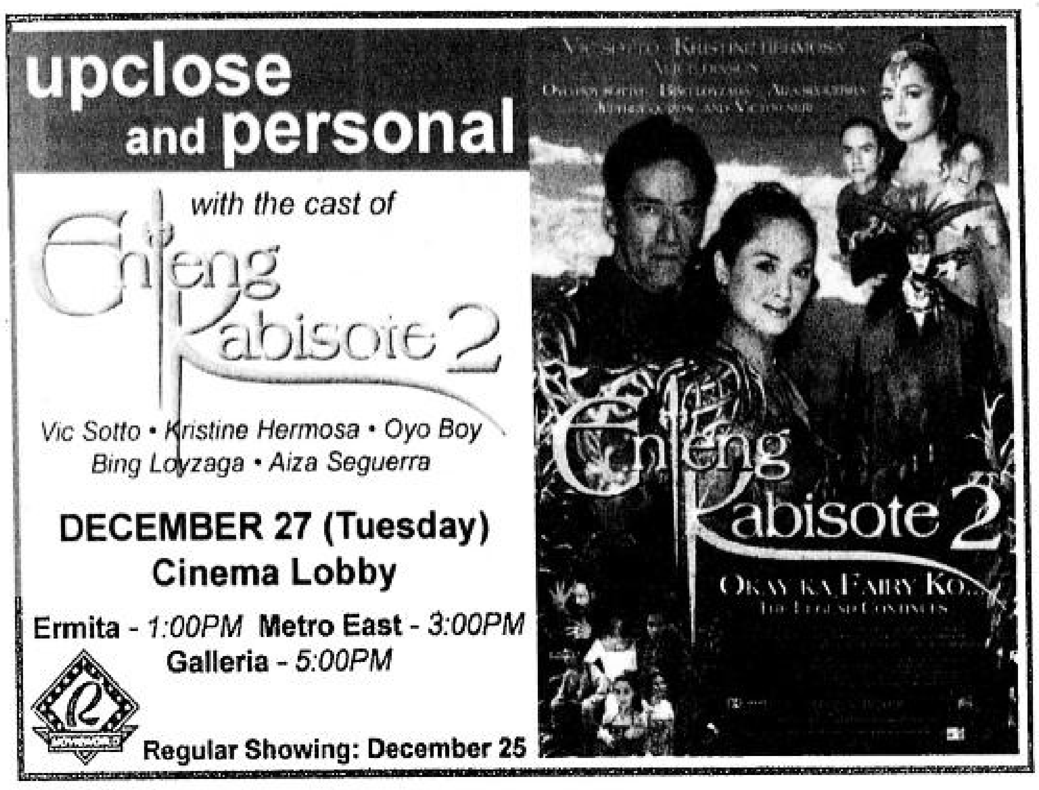
PINAKAMASAYANG PELIKULA PARA SA PAMILYA!
THE COMEDY-FANTASY MOVIE OF THE YEAR
MTRCB RATING ▶ G ALL AGES ADMITTED
VIC SOTTO KRISTINE HERMOSA
ALICE DIXSON
OYO BOY SOTTO BING LOYZAGA AIZA SEGUERRA
JEFFREY QUIZON AND VICTOR NERI
Enteng Kabisote 2
DIRECTED BY TONY Y. REYES
OKAY KA FAIRY KO...
THE LEGEND CONTINUES
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2005
FREE ENTENG MASK FOR EVERY PURCHASE OF 2 TICKETS ON OPENING DAY AT ALL SM CINEMAS. (PROMO GOOD WHILE SUPPLY LAST)

NOW SHOWING
A MUST SEE HORROR-THRILLER FILM
MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 CHILDREN BELOW 13 YRS. OLD SHALL BE ALLOWED ONLY IF ACCOMPANIED BY A PARENT OR ADULT
WARNING: THIS MOVIE CONTAINS FRIGHTFUL SCENES AND OTHER SCENES THAT WOULD BE DISTRESSFUL TO VERY YOUNG VIEWERS. PARENTS ARE STRONGLY CAUTIONED AGAINST BRINGING ALONG CHILDREN BELOW THE AGE OF 13 YEARS
RICA Peralejo MARVIN Agustin and ALESSANDRA De Rossi introducing RYAN Agoncillo
ANDREA Del Rosario ANA Capri JAMES Blanco and LIZA Lorena
MANIWALA
MAKIRAMDAM
MATAKOT...
KUTOB
DIRECTED BY JOSE JAVIER REYES
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2005
FREE TAROT READING FOR TICKET HOLDERS AT SM MEGAMALL, SM FAIRVIEW & SM NORTH ON DEC. 26, 27 & 28.


upclose and personal
with the cast of
Enteng Kabisote 2
Vic Sotto • Kristine Hermosa • Oyo Boy
Bing Loyzaga • Aiza Seguerra
DECEMBER 27 (Tuesday)
Cinema Lobby
Ermita - 1:00PM Metro East - 3:00PM
Galleria - 5:00PM
Regular Showing: December 25
Enteng Kabisote 2
OKAY KA FAIRY KO...
THE LEGEND CONTINUES

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION
MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX
6th floor Shangrila Plaza EDSA corner Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City
Telephone: 633.2227 / 6337851 loc. 171
1 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE 2 GP
2 (DOLBY) MULAWIN THE MOVIE GP
3 (DOLBY) TERRORIST HUNTER P13
4 (DOLBY) KUTOB P13
PREMIERE
(DOLBY) CLOSED

Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 MULAWIN
2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 KUTOB
4 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150
3 EXODUS
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
5 AKO LEGAL WIFE

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 5433994
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3 TERRORIST HUNTER
4 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan, Telephone No. (044) 600-3025
1 MULAWIN
2 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3 EXODUS

Cinemagic Pacific Mall
(Lucena City) tel. 6605271
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
4 MULAWIN

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 (DDS) RESERVED
2 (SDDS) RESERVED
3 (DTS) RESERVED
4 (GOLD DTS) EXODUS
5 (GOLD DOLBY) SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
6 (GOLD SDDS) KUTOB
7 (GOLD DOLBY) TERRORIST HUNTER
8 MULAWIN
9 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
10 AKO LEGAL WIFE

Blue Wave MARQUINTON
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 (DOLBY) KUTOB
3 (DOLBY) SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
4 (DOLBY) EXODUS

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228
1 (DOLBY) EXODUS
2 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3 KUTOB
4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 MULAWIN

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 MULAWIN
3 TERRORIST HUNTER
4 KUTOB

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 MULAWIN
2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 KUTOB

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) MULAWIN
2 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3 (DTS ES) ENTENG KABISOTE
4 EXODUS

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 MULAWIN
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY) SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
4 (DTS) EXODUS

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 MULAWIN
2 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE
4 (DTS) EXODUS

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 MULAWIN
2 EXODUS

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72
1 (DOLBY) AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 (DOLBY) TERRORIST HUNTER
4 (DOLBY) KUTOB

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 MULAWIN
2 (DTS) ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY) EXODUS
4 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Binan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2 (DOLBY) EXODUS
3 (DTS) ENTENG KABISOTE
4 MULAWIN

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 MULAWIN
3 (DOLBY) EXODUS

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY) EXODUS
4 (DTS) MULAWIN

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 MULAWIN
2 EXODUS
3 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)
1 EXODUS
2 ENTENG KABISOTE

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2 TERRORIST HUNTER

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 MULAWIN
3 KUTOB
4 (DTS) EXODUST

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) EXODUST
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DTS) MULAWIN
4 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
5 ENTENG KABISOTE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 MULAWIN
4 EXODUST

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

Shall We Dance? ...

From page A2-1

One step further

"Shall We Dance?" goes a step further than its precursor on the same channel, "Eezy Dancing," in the sense that it not only showcases talents but also encourages and converts non-aficionados of ballroom dancing. Each episode presents a brief background on two dances at a time, say, samba and swing, before the contestants dance.

Unfortunately, shots on leg movement and footwork are lacking. The live band, Soul Jive, is very good, except that the music is poorly selected and difficult to dance to, especially for beginners. Moreover, the lines of Dominic Ochoa, Lucy Torres-Gomez's co-host, are often corny. The two also lack spontaneity.

The hosts should show they're really into it.

Lucy studied ballroom dancing only for "Shall We Dance?" In the first episode, she gracefully danced the tango with a big red rose in her hair, and in an attractive black dress with silver accent in front and red lining on the inside of the skirt. The show will draw more viewers if Lucy and, say, Bichara danced more on cam.

Ballroom dancing is not only about wearing the right costume or executing the right steps. It is also a stress buster, an excuse to meet people, a memory jogger, a means for self-discovery and self-confidence, a form of self-expression. It's romanticism, spirituality, exuberance, breaking rules, and creativity. Above all, it's enjoyment, which is what "Shall We Dance? The Celebrity Dance Challenge" should be about.

New films ...

From page A2-6

native production, **Johnny Delgado** plays an overly controlling man who makes life miserable for his daughters, played by Picache, **Angel Aquino** and **Juliana Palermo**.

Marvelous

PICACHE'S portrayal is the production's best partly because it's a stretch for her—she plays a butch lesbian! The actress' talent is marvelous to behold in action, because she *becomes* the Lesbian.

Yes, Cherry Pie *disappears* into her character, and we get totally involved. Acting students should make it a point to catch "Kaleldo" when it is shown in theaters early next year, because they'll learn a lot about Acting as Being.

Having enjoyed Christopher and Cherry Pie's exceptional portrayals in their new movies, we're quite sure that they'll figure strongly in Best Supporting Actor and Actress in film awards next year.

We end this piece with a special request: We hope a perspicacious producer out there casts Christopher and Cherry Pie as leads in a new production. Can you imagine what a marvelous acting showcase that movie would be?! Make it happen—soon!

Araneta Center Leisure Guide

CINEMA SCHEDULES

Gateway CINEPLEX 10
LEVEL 4, GATEWAY MALL

ONLY P99 ADMISSION
P120 RESERVED SEATS

DOLBY DIGITAL-EX

FOR INQUIRIES, PLEASE CALL TICKETNET AT **911-5555**

METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL	MULAWIN 11:40 / 2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40
SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 11:40 / 2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40	AKO, LEGAL WIFE 12:30 / 2:50 / 5:10 / 7:30 / 9:50
EXODUS 11:00 / 1:10 / 3:20 / 5:30 / 7:40 / 9:50	KUTOB 12:50 / 3:05 / 5:20 / 7:35 / 9:50
ENTENG KABISOTE 2 10:40 / 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30	TERRORIST HUNTER 12:20 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:40

ALI MALL CINEMAS

❶ KUTOB 11:40 / 1:55 / 4:10 / 6:25 / 8:40	❹ ENTENG KABISOTE 2 11:55 / 1:55 / 4:05 / 6:15 / 8:25
❷ TERRORIST HUNTER 11:10 / 1:30 / 3:50 / 6:10 / 8:30	❺ AKO LEGAL WIFE 11:20 / 1:40 / 4:00 / 6:20 / 8:40
❸ MULAWIN 12:35 / 3:05 / 5:35 / 8:05	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

ARANETA COLISEUM EVENTS

SPELLBOUND MAGIC SHOW *Dec. 27 Tue.- Showtime 2 pm & 6 pm*	WORLD SLASHER CUP *January 17, 19 & 21*

LOG ON TO www.aranetacenter.net FOR MORE DETAILS OR TO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR WEEKLY E-MAIL ENTERTAINMENT UPDATES

合法妻
Ako Legal Wife
Mano Po 4?!

Meet & greet the stars on:
Dec. 29 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 30 at 4pm - SM Southmall
8pm - Star City

Directed by JOEL LAMANGAN, dgpi

Rufa Mae Quinto Cherry Pie Picache Jay Manalo and ZsaZsa Padilla

John Prats JC de Vera Bianca King Ella Guevara Julianne Lee

AN OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE 2005 METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL-PHILIPPINES

Text **WIFE** to **4627** (Smart) and **2364** (Globe)

NOW SHOWING

B MTRCB RATING PG-13

REGAL ENTERTAINMENT INC.
www.regalfilms.com/akolegalwife

YEHEY

"POSO"
GLORIA ROMERO YASMIEN KURDI RAINIER CASTILLO MARCO ALCARAZ
BIBOY RAMIREZ JENINE DESIDERIO
and MS. AI AI DELAS ALAS

"AQUARIUM"
OGIE ALCASID
WILMA DOESNT REGGIE CURLEY PAUL SALAS
and ARA MINA

"LIHIM"
TANYA GARCIA
ELIZABETH OROPESA NONI BUENCAMINO RONNIE LAZARO
and MARK ANTHONY FERNANDEZ

SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2k5

Meet & greet the stars on:
Dec. 28 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 29 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 30 at 4pm - SM Southmall

DIRECTED BY URO DELA CRUZ RICO MARIA ILARDE RICHARD SOMES

Text **SHAKE** to **4627** (Smart) and **2364** (Globe)

NOW SHOWING MTCB RATING GP

REGAL ENTERTAINMENT INC.
www.regalfilms.com/shakerattleandroll2k5

reality entertainment, inc.

AN OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE 2005 METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL-PHILIPPINES

CHRISTOPHER DE LEON DENNIS TRILLO BOOTS ANSON-ROA & EDDIE GARCIA

JENNYLYN MERCADO MARK HERRAS PAULEEN LUNA

True love happens once in a...
BLUE MOON

a Palanca Award-winning screenplay

a film by JOEL LAMANGAN, DGPI

Meet & greet the stars on:
Dec. 29 at 4pm -Glorietta
Dec. 30 at 4pm -SM North EDSA
8pm -Star City

POLO RAVALES REGGIE CURLEY TIN TIN BERSOLA-BABAO PAOLO PARAISO

VANGIE LABALAN TIN ARNALDO PINKY AMADOR JANNA VICTORIA RJ ROSALES JANUARY ISAAC ALAN PAULE JIM PEBANCO

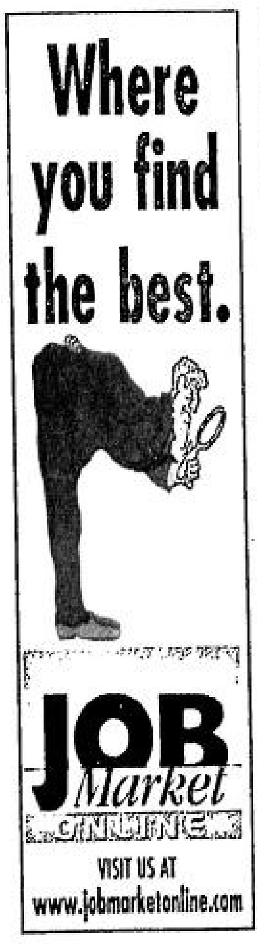
AN OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL-PHILIPPINES

OPENS JANUARY 1, 2006

Text **MOON** to **4627**
(Smart & Talk 'N Text)

REGAL ENTERTAINMENT INC.
www.regalfilms.com/bluemoon

WWW.YEHEY.COM NoCurfew



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TICKETS ALSO AVAILABLE AT THE ALIW THEATER (STAR CITY) TICKET BOOTH STARTING 1:00 PM DAILY!

BIG FAMILY SHOW, MAGANDANG PAMASKO!

ACROBATIC NA, MAGIC AT COMEDY PA! PINAGUUSAPAN !!

HUA MULAN
Magical Fantasy Journey

Show Schedule :

December 23	7:00pm
December 24	4:00pm
December 25	1:00pm / 4:00pm 7:00pm
December 26	4:00pm / 7:00pm
December 27	7:00pm
December 28	7:00pm
December 29	4:00pm / 7:00pm
December 30	4:00pm / 7:00pm
January 1	4:00pm / 7:00pm
January 2	4:00pm

TICKETNET 911-5555

TicketWorld 891-9999

ALIW THEATER AT STAR CITY, ROXAS BLVD.
DECEMBER 23, 2005 TO JANUARY 2, 2006
TICKET PRICE :
PHP 600. PHP 500. PHP 400 PHP 200

sportsplus MANILA BULLETIN DZRH

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

CINEMA ACCESS
635-5555
FOR ALL BRANCHES

www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

MOVIES/SCHEDULES/PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

GALLERIA
682-9116

1 KUTOB • THX
2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
6 MULAWIN
7 EXODUS
8 EXODUS
9 ENTENG KABISOTE
10 MULAWIN

ERMITA
636-7809 to 12

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
3 MULAWIN 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00
4 TERRORIST HUNTER 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
5 KUTOB 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00
7 EXODUS 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00

METRO EAST
682-8193 / 682-8199

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 11:15 1:45 4:15 6:45 9:15
2 EXODUS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 MULAWIN 11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00
5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
6 TERRORIST HUNTER
7 KUTOB
8 EXODUS

NOVALICHES
935-3231/935-3229-30

1 EXODUS
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
3 KUTOB
4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 MULAWIN
6 ENTENG KABISOTE
7 AKO LEGAL WIFE
8 EXODUS

CITISQUARE MALABON
288-2576

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
2 EXODUS
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER
687-5378

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
3 EXODUS
4 MULAWIN

upclose and personal

with the cast of

Enteng Kabisote 2

Vic Sotto • Kristine Hermosa • Oyo Boy Bing Loyzaga • Aiza Seguerra

DECEMBER 27 (Tuesday)
Cinema Lobby

Ermita - *1:00PM* **Metro East** - *3:00PM*
Galleria - *5:00PM*

Regular Showing: December 25

Enteng Kabisote 2
OKAY KA FAIRY KO
THE LEGEND CONTINUES

STA. ROSA
(049) 837-0807

1 KING KONG
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 MULAWIN
4 EXODUS
5 AKO LEGAL WIFE

LIPA
(043) 757-3664
(043) 312-5870

1 KING KONG
2 EXODUS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 MULAWIN
5 AKO LEGAL WIFE

DASMARIÑAS
(046) 852-212
(046) 416-4332

1 MULAWIN
2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 KUTOB
4 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
5 EXODUS

ANGELES
(045) 892-2349

1 KING KONG
2 EXODUS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 MULAWIN

IMUS
(046) 875-3838
(046) 471-8188

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 MULAWIN
4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 KUTOB
6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL

STARMILLS
(045) 875-1827
(045) 961-6270

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 KUTOB
4 EXODUS
5 ENTENG KABISOTE
6 MULAWIN

BACOLOD
(034) 441-0453
(034) 441-0459

1 KING KONG
2 EXODUS
3 MULAWIN
4 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL

ILOILO
(033) 336-8070

1 KUTOB
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
3 EXODUS
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 ENTENG KABISOTE
6 MULAWIN

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All Year Round

A Pre Paid Movie Pass to the Hottest Seats in town.

Get Special discounts for volume purchases!

For marketing and events/reservations please call Marketing Services Department at 687-7945 to 47 locals 14 and 15

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GLORIETTA • GREENBELT

ALABANG TOWN

AYALA CENTER CEBU

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The Gift
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Glorietta : 752-7324 Alabang Town Center : 842-2782/772-1860
Ayala Center Cebu : (032) 232-0300 Market! Market! : 886-7519

www.ayalamalls.com.ph

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU
Avid Sony Exhibit December 19 to 27, 2005 Glorietta Activity Center Christmas Fireworks Display December 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM	Blims / Automatic Center Exhibit Dec. 19 to 31, 2005	Sunsilk Mall Tour Exhibit December 27 to 28, 2005 Wagas Exhibit / Uyfang Bazaar December 1 to 31, 2005

AYALA GREENBELT

Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra Christmas Shows
December 30, 2005
Christmas Fireworks Display
December 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM

GREENBELT Onstage

NOT JUST JAZZ CHRISTMAS
December 28 & 29
For inquiries, please call 887-0710

Ayala MUSEUM

Registration for Art Workshops now on-going at Ayala Museum
For inquiries, please call 757-7117 to 21 loc 29.
Online registration at www.ayalamuseum.org

AYALA CINEMAS

Reserve your seats by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729 7777

G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	4 EXODUS
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	3 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 TERRORIST HUNTER	5 KUTOB	6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	7 EXODUS
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX TERRORIST HUNTER GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 KUTOB GUARANTEED SEATS	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL GUARANTEED SEATS	5 EXODUS GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX MULAWIN	2 TERRORIST HUNTER		
	3 KUTOB	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	5 EXODUS	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	3 MULAWIN	4 TERRORIST HUNTER

STARGAZING
MEET & GREET THE STARS OF
Enteng Kabisote 2
OKAY KA FAIRY KO
THE LEGEND CONTINUES
AYALA CINEMAS

December 27 (Tuesday) 6:00 PM
Glorietta 1 cinema lobby

FREE Picture taking & autograph signing with the stars for the first twenty (20) moviegoers who will present their ENTENG KABISOTE movie tickets

ENTENG KABISOTE 2 opens December 25 at Ayala Cinemas

Customer Service text hotline: 0917 6095900
Customer Service text hotline: Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm
Greenbelt - 757 4853; from 11am to 12mn

Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324

All-Digital Cinemas

MARKET! MARKET!
The fun is in the finds
Developed and managed by Ayala Land, Inc.

Free Seating Cinemas: P80.00

① SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
② KUTOB
③ MULAWIN
④ ENTENG KABISOTE 2
⑤ AKO LEGAL WIFE

EVENTS! EVENTS!

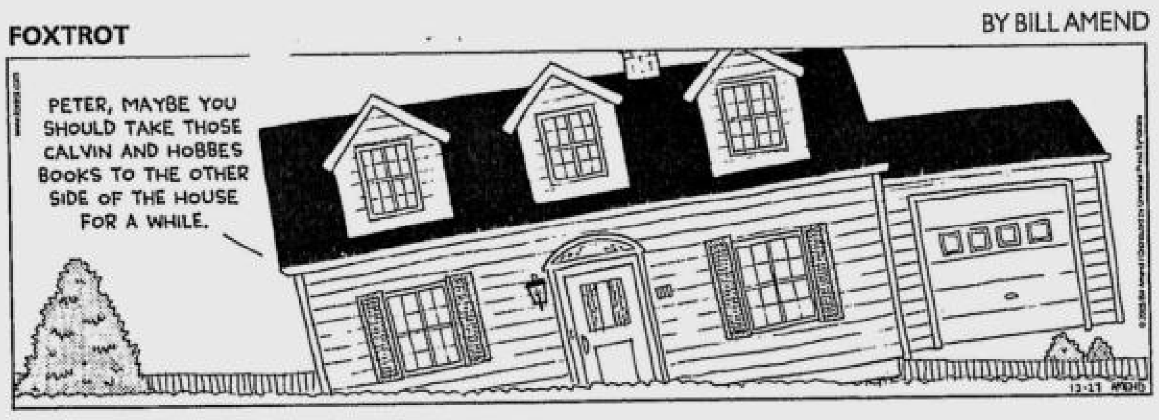
MARKET! MARKET!
The fun is in the finds

Christmas Shopping Bag

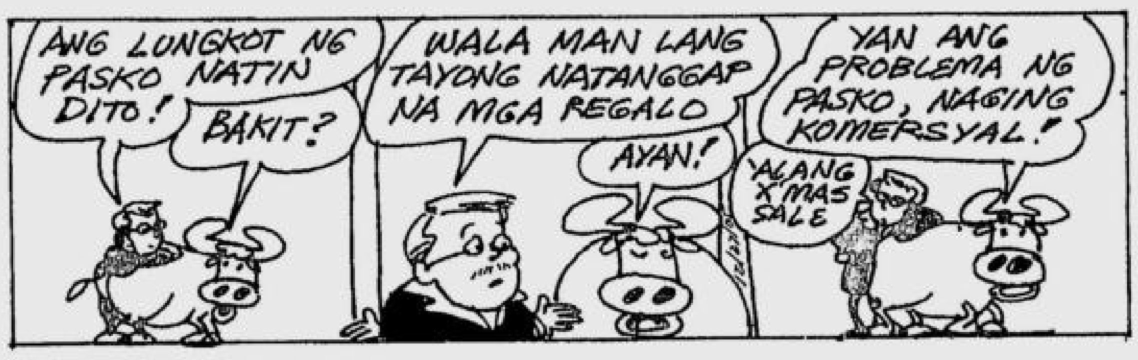
1. Promo period is from Dec. 9 to 31, 2005.
2. For every P500 single or accumulated receipt purchase dated on the same day in any regular retail store, food choices, and Metro Department Store and Supermarket, shoppers will get 1 Christmas Shopping Bag.
3. A maximum of 4 shopping bags will be given to shoppers presenting single or accumulated receipts amounting to P2001 and over.
4. Shoppers will present their receipt to the Customer Service booth to redeem their Market! Market! shopping bag.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-580, Series of 2005

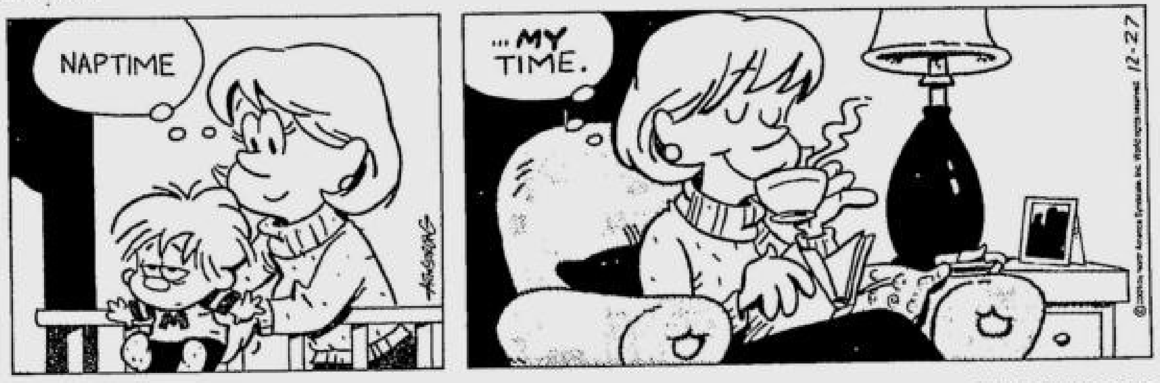
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


PETER, MAYBE YOU SHOULD TAKE THOSE CALVIN AND HOBBES BOOKS TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HOUSE FOR A WHILE.
12-27 AMEND

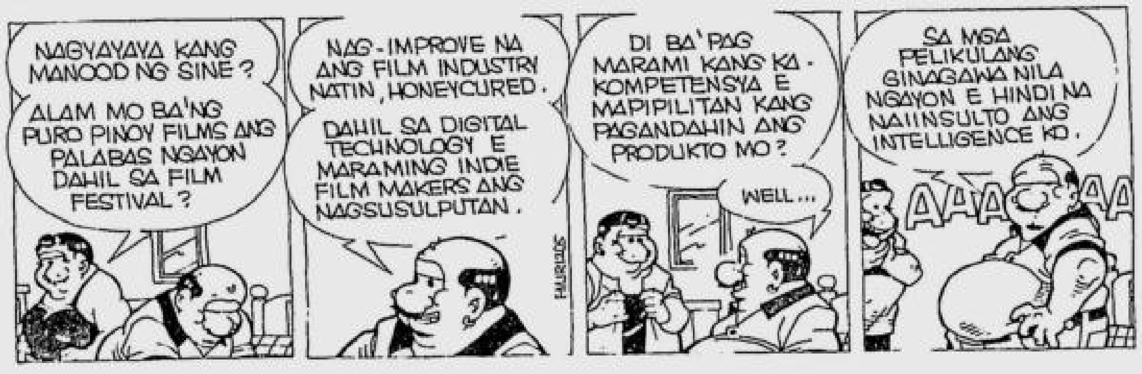
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


ANG LUNGKOT NG PASKO NATIN DITO!
BAKIT?
WALA MAN LANG TAYONG NATANGGAP NA MGA REGALO
AYAN!
YAN ANG PROBLEMA NG PASKO, NAGING KOMERSYAL!
'ALANG X'MAS SALE

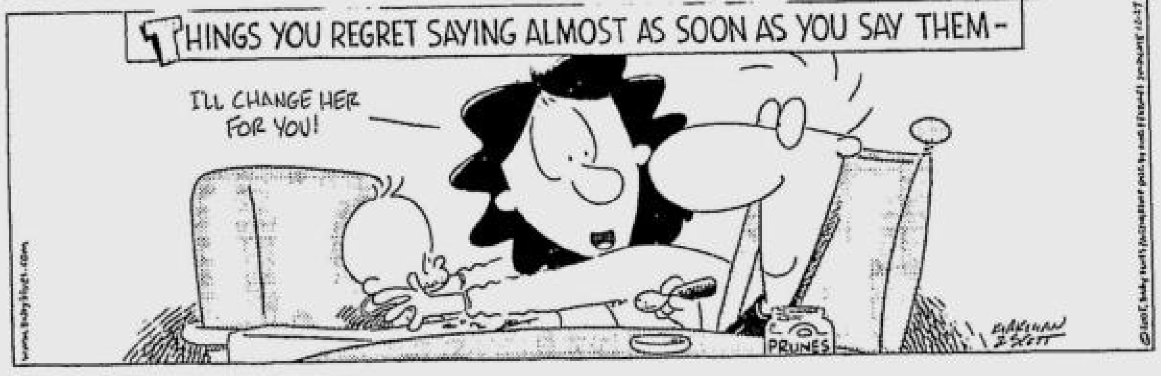
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


NAPTIME
...MY TIME.
12-27

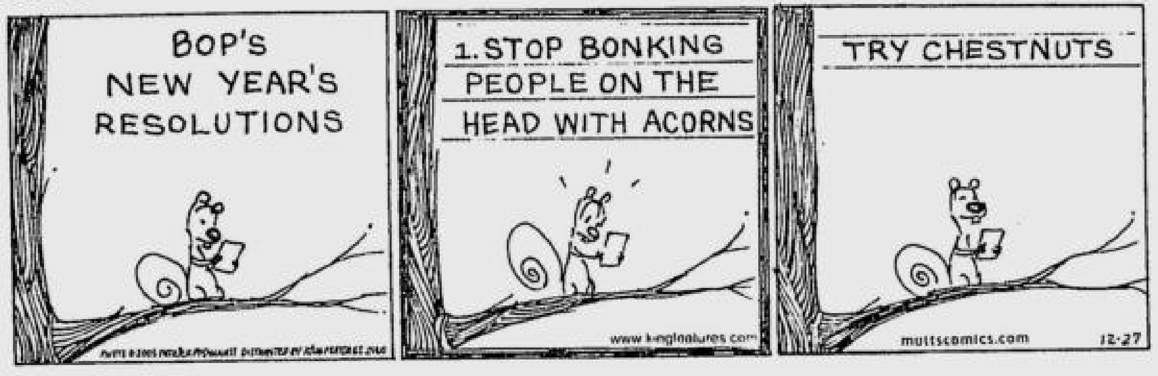
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


NAGYAYAYA KANG MANOOD NG SINE?
ALAM MO BA'NG PURO PINOY FILMS ANG PALABAS NGAYON DAHIL SA FILM FESTIVAL?
NAG-IMPROVE NA ANG FILM INDUSTRY NATIN, HONEYCURED.
DAHIL SA DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY E MARAMING INDIE FILM MAKERS ANG NAGSUSULPUTAN.
DI BA'PAG MARAMI KANG KA-KOMPETENSYA E MAPIPILITAN KANG PAGANDAHIN ANG PRODUKTO MO?
WELL...
SA MGA PELIKULANG GINAGAWA NILA NGAYON E HINDI NA NAIINSULTO ANG INTELLIGENCE KO.
AAA AA

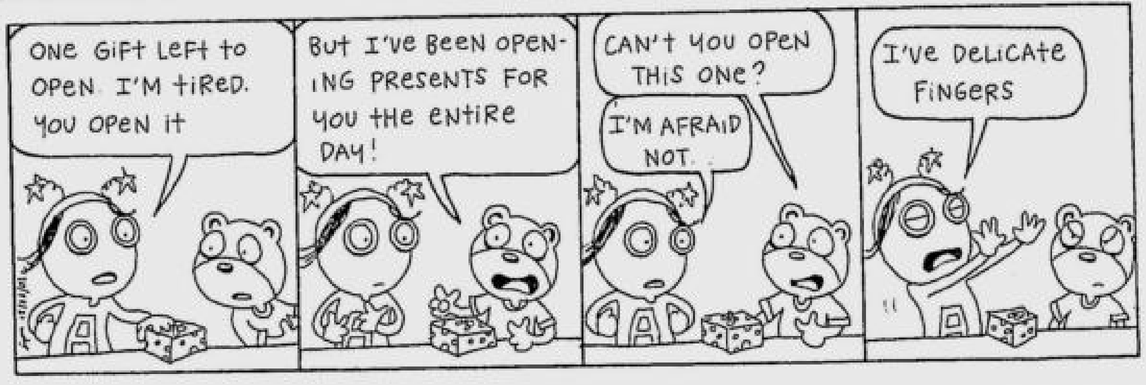
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


THINGS YOU REGRET SAYING ALMOST AS SOON AS YOU SAY THEM-
I'LL CHANGE HER FOR YOU!
PRUNES
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

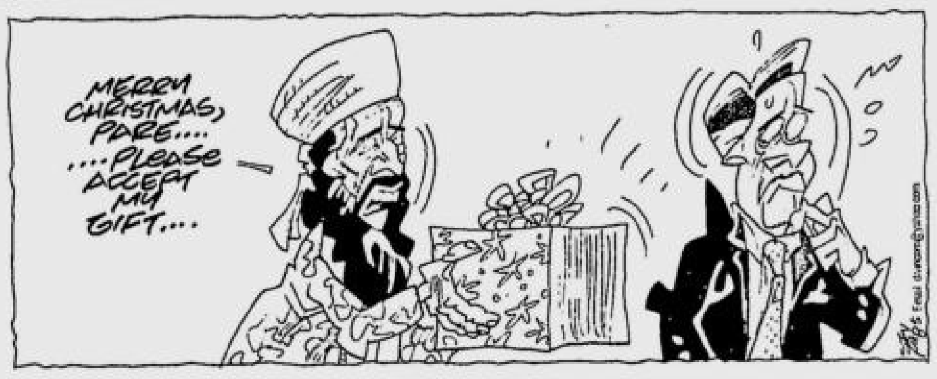
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


BOP'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
1. STOP BONKING PEOPLE ON THE HEAD WITH ACORNS
TRY CHESTNUTS
www.kingfeatures.com
muttscomics.com
12-27

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


One Gift Left to open. I'm tired. You open it
But I've been opening presents for you the entire day!
Can't you open this one?
I'm afraid not.
I've delicate fingers

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


MERRY CHRISTMAS, PARE.... ....PLEASE ACCEPT MY GIFT....

LABIS NA NA-OFFEND SI OSAMA DAHIL HINDI TALAGA TINANGGAP NG KAIBIGAN NYA ANG REGALO

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're very generous. Not only do you share what you own, you share your heart with others. You believe in helping. You have wit, and you often develop technical skills. You believe in service to others. Faith is an important part of your life. The year ahead will focus on your closest relationships. Singles could meet someone. **Birthdate of:** Marlene Dietrich, actress; Gerard Depardieu, actor; Tovah Feldshuh, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You're at a slow boil right now about money or possessions. You're upset about something, yet you can't speak up. You're stuck between a rock and a hard place. (This is short-lived.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Everybody feels a little bit hot under the collar today. Your efforts to do something are blocked, most likely by a parent or family obligations. Such is life.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You're filled with feelings of doubt, and you might not know why. Don't worry about this. The feeling passes quickly. Today Mars is square with Saturn, and this isn't easy for anyone.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Quarrels with a friend (or perhaps a group) could upset you today. However, you feel it would be petty to mention anything. Somehow you are muzzled. It's not an easy place to be.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Your ambitions are definitely thwarted today. This is a poor day to put forth proposals to bosses, parents, VIPs and authority figures in your life. Wait.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Plans connected with publishing, travel, dealing with foreign countries and higher education are suddenly on hold. What gives? Can't you count on anything? Apparently not. (This passes quickly.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Difficulties with others about shared possessions or jointly held property seem to arise now. You're not happy about something, yet you can't speak up.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is a tough day to deal with partners, spouses and close friends. Everybody wants to rain on your parade. These obstacles disappear soon.

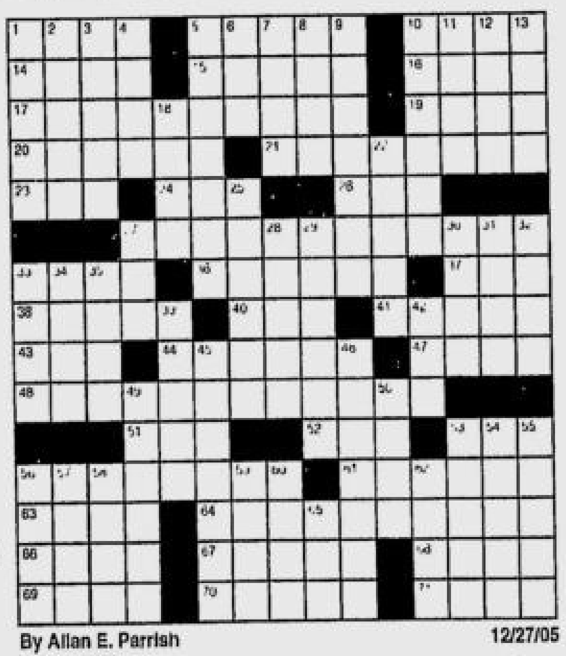
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Try to be extra-patient with coworkers today. You might be upset about something, yet you feel you have to remain silent. This is frustrating. (It will pass quickly.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): The road of romance is rocky today. Working with children is also challenging. Matters connected with sports are just a hard slog. (This is temporary.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Your home life has been stressed by renovations, moves, family conflicts and chaos of some kind. It hasn't been easy. Today you feel frustrated because your hands are tied. Patience.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Communication with others (especially siblings) is stressful today. You might want to lash out at someone. Expressing anger achieves nothing. It only makes everyone miserable. Be patient.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Allan E. Parrish
Mentor, OH
12/27/05

ACROSS
1 "Pursuit of the Graf __"
5 Scheduled next
10 Voodoo charm
14 Circle parts
15 Zora __ Hurston
16 Be up against
17 Underground pit
19 Unless, in law
20 Kingsley film
21 Ultra-liberals
23 Comic Phillips
24 Nabokov novel
26 __ pro nobis
27 Dodger executive who signed Jackie Robinson
33 __ B'rith
36 Secret plan
37 Woodshed item
38 Actress Loy
40 Derby, e.g.
41 "Positively 4th Street" singer
43 Drenched
44 Genetic copies
47 SDI weaponry
48 Liner baggage
51 Critic Reed
52 Spanish gold
53 Turf
56 Man with no past?
61 "Faust" poet
63 Ronnie of the NFL
64 Interstate interchange
66 "Broken Blossoms" star
67 Edmonton pro
68 Saab model
69 Jessica of "Dark Angel"
70 __ Gritty Dirt Band
71 Hint to this puzzle's theme

DOWN
1 "Beetle Bailey" character
2 Tourney type
3 Thrifty prefix
4 Cornerstone abbr.
5 Five Nations tribe members
6 "__ Blu Dipinto Di Blu (Volare)"
7 Towering
8 Winglike parts
9 Carry out
10 "Flashdance" song
11 Kimono sashes
12 Equitable
13 Elevator man?
18 Scorch
22 True partner?
25 Boat holder
27 Open container
28 Plainsong
29 Different: pref.
30 Journalist Marvin
31 LSAT, e.g.
32 Cravings
33 Autobahn autos
34 Putin's refusal
35 Comic Johnson
39 Top spots
42 Tibetan beast
45 Dictionary
46 Hospital procedure
49 First name in soul
50 American-born Jordanian queen
53 Range rover
54 Chicago airport
55 "Moll Flanders" author
56 Seaweed, e.g.
57 Drudge
58 Plane-crash grp.
59 Et __ (and others)
60 Frisky equine
62 Israeli port
65 Old hand

Monday's Puzzle Solved

M	S	S	■	C	A	P	R	A	■	S	A	S	S	Y
A	T	T	■	A	S	E	A	N	■	E	V	O	K	E
D	A	R	■	T	H	E	M	A	N	N	E	R	I	N
C	R	A	S	S	E	R	■	■	A	T	N	O	■	■
O	C	T	A	■	■	A	H	A	B	■	U	R	A	L
W	H	I	C	H	I	T	I	S	■	B	E	I	G	E
■	■	■	S	O	B	■	R	I	P	O	S	T	E	S
L	M	I	■	G	I	V	E	N	I	S	■	Y	E	S
T	O	R	N	A	D	O	S	■	C	C	I	■	■	■
T	I	E	O	N	■	W	O	R	T	H	M	O	R	E
A	L	E	C	■	E	S	N	E	■	■	A	V	E	C
■	■	H	A	S	T	■	■	T	O	O	M	U	C	H
T	H	A	N	T	H	E	G	I	F	T	■	L	A	O
R	O	N	D	A	■	D	E	L	F	T	■	E	N	E
E	N	D	O	R	■	D	R	E	S	S	■	S	T	D

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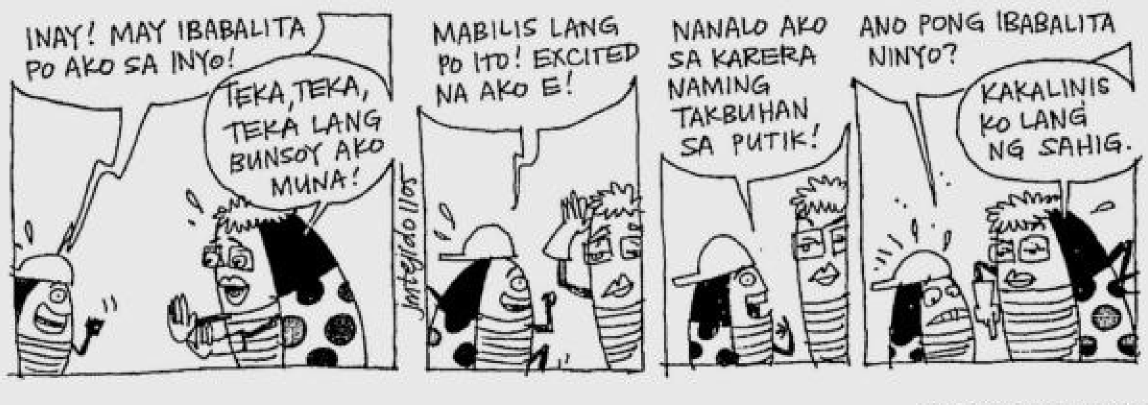
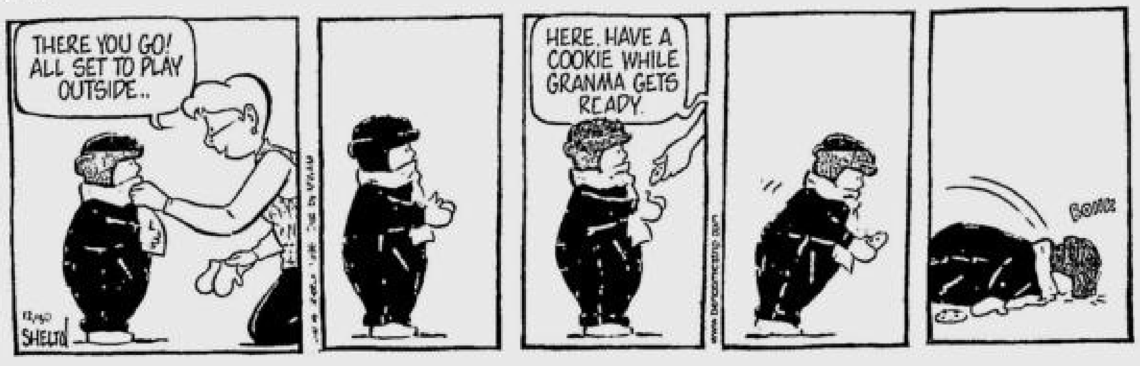
12/27/05

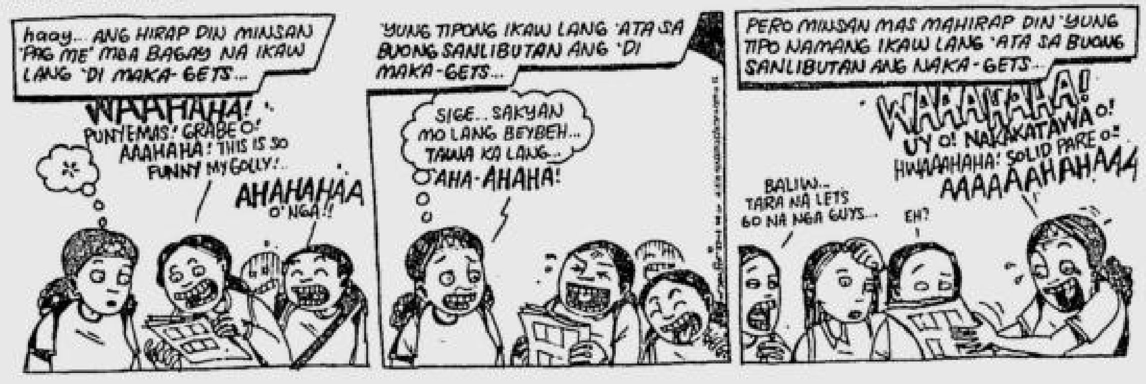
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


INAY! MAY IBABALITA PO AKO SA INYO!
TEKA, TEKA, TEKA LANG BUNSOY AKO MUNA!
MABILIS LANG PO ITO! EXCITED NA AKO E!
NANALO AKO SA KARERA NAMING TAKBUHAN SA PUTIK!
ANO PONG IBABALITA NINYO?
KAKALINIS KO LANG NG SAHIG.
tejido 11/05

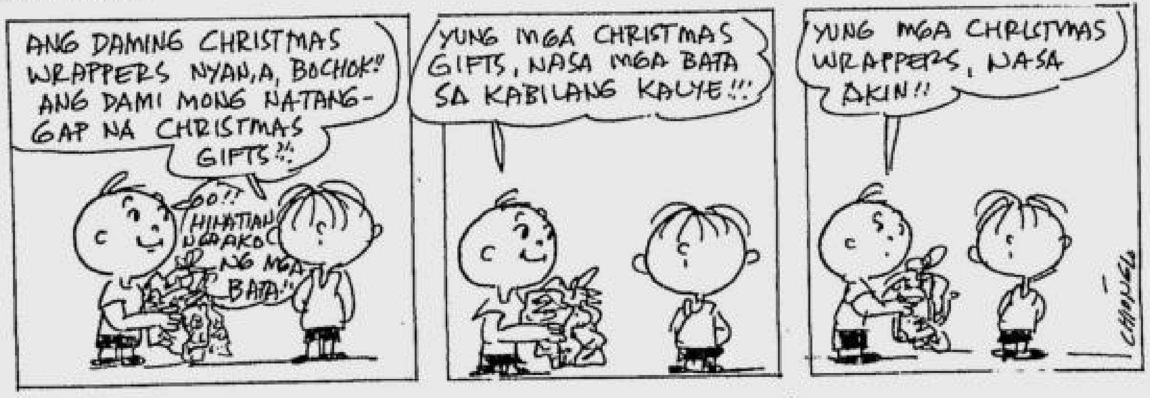
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


THERE YOU GO! ALL SET TO PLAY OUTSIDE..
HERE. HAVE A COOKIE WHILE GRANMA GETS READY.
BONK
SHELTON

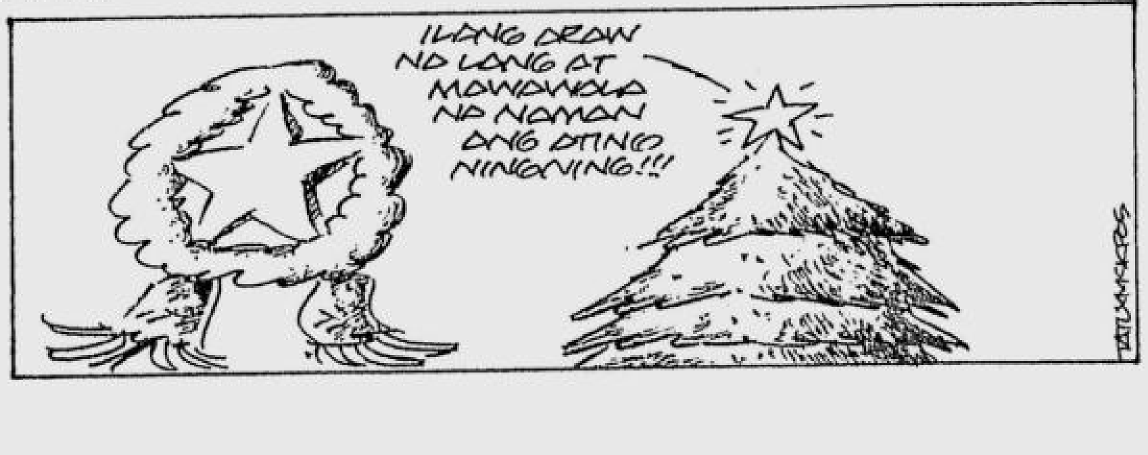
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


haay.. ANG HIRAP DIN MINSAN 'PAG ME' MGA BAGAY NA IKAW LANG 'DI MAKA-GETS...
WAAHAHAHA!
PUNYEMAS! GRABE O! AAAHAHA! THIS IS SO FUNNY MYGOLLY!..
AHAHAHAA O'NGA!!
'YUNG TIPONG IKAW LANG 'ATA SA BUONG SANLIBUTAN ANG 'DI MAKA-GETS...
SIGE.. SAKYAN MO LANG BEYBEH... TAWA KA LANG... AHA-AHAHA!
PERO MINSAN MAS MAHIRAP DIN 'YUNG TIPO NAMANG IKAW LANG 'ATA SA BUONG SANLIBUTAN ANG NAKA-GETS...
WAAHAHAHA!
UY O! NAKAKATAWA O! HWAAAHAHA! SOLID PARE O! AAAAAAHAHAAA
BALIW.. TARA NA LETS GO NA MGA GUYS...
EH?

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ANG DAMING CHRISTMAS WRAPPERS NYAN, A, BOCHOK!! ANG DAMI MONG NATANGGAP NA CHRISTMAS GIFTS?!
OO!! HIHATIAN UGAKO NG MGA BATA!!
YUNG MGA CHRISTMAS GIFTS, NASA MGA BATA SA KABILANG KALYE!!!
YUNG MGA CHRISTMAS WRAPPERS, NASA AKIN!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


ILANG ARAW NA LANG AT MAWAWALA NA NAMAN ANG ATING NINGNING!!!

New films, exceptional performances

WE'RE UPBEAT ABOUT LOCAL MOVIES' prospects next year, partly because we've taken a preview peek at some of the film industry's new offerings, which feature a number of exceptional performances.

In "Nasaan Na Si Francis?" the standout portrayal is turned in by **Christopher de Leon.** He plays a drug dealer looking for Francis (Epy Quizon) to collect on a drug debt.

Overdose

EPY'S "performance" is hampered by the fact that his character dies shortly after the start of the movie, so the actor has to be inert for most of the production.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Happily, Christopher doesn't have to work under such constraints. In fact, he plays it big psychedelic because his character is almost always high on Ecstasy.

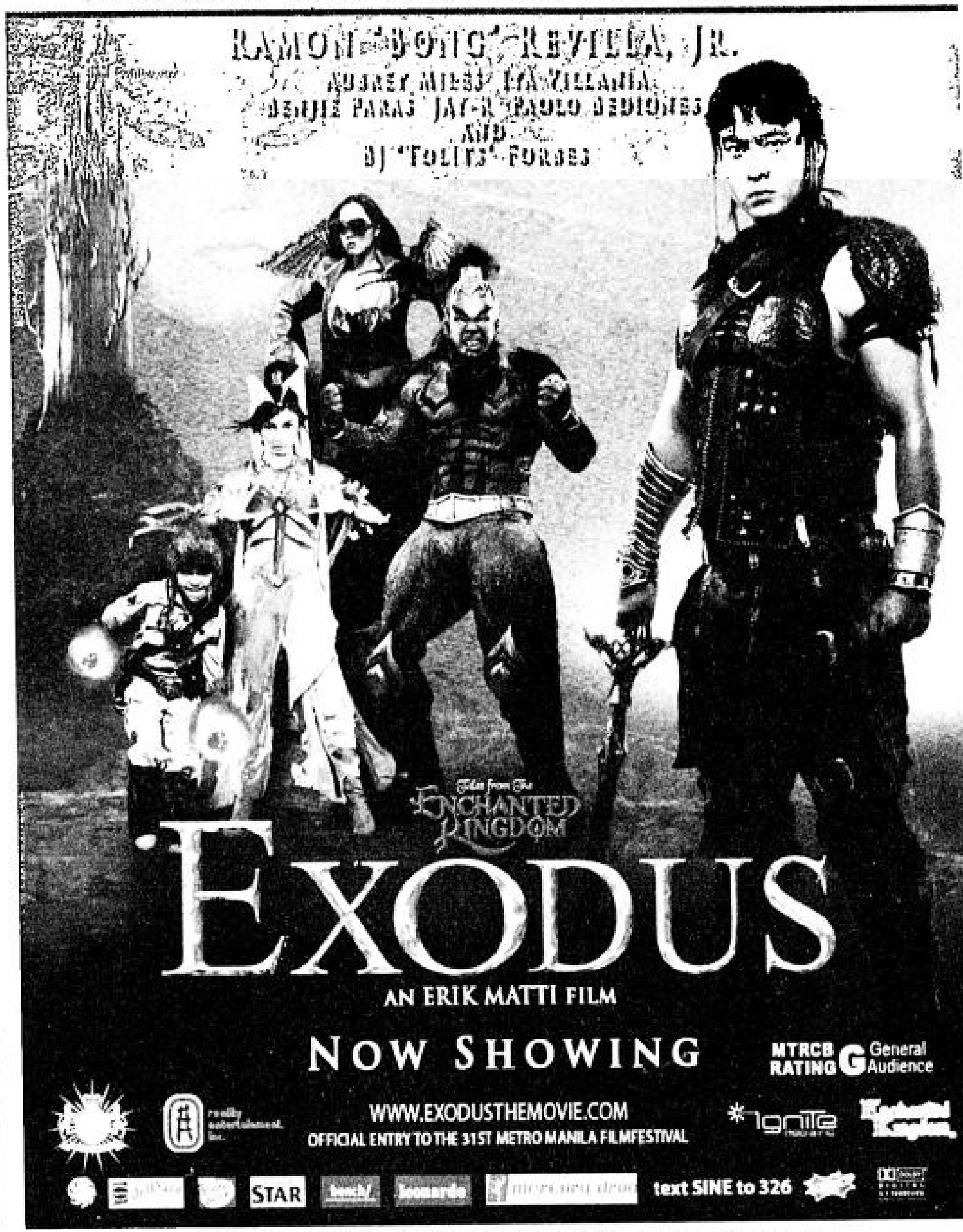
The actor takes full advantage of the freedom that this provides, and he goes to town with his wonderfully loopy portrayal, which lends the film a winning zest and zing.

It's no secret that, in the past, we've rapped De Leon for his tendency to be predictable (in our view, at least). Thus, we're extra happy to say that, in "Francis," the actor is delightfully creative, fresh and vital.

The other standout performance we'd like to cite here is turned in by **Cherry Pie Picache** in "Kaleldo," by Dante Mendoza. In the alter-

NEW FILMS/ A2-2

BONG REVILLA DOES IT AGAIN...
EXODUS: THE NEW BOX OFFICE HERO!


RAMON "BONG" REVILLA, JR.
AUBREY MILES IYA VILLANIA
BENJIE PARAS JAY-R PAOLO BEDIONES
AND
BJ "TOLITS" FORBES
Tales from The Enchanted Kingdom
EXODUS
AN ERIK MATTI FILM
NOW SHOWING
MTRCB RATING G General Audience
WWW.EXODUSTHEMOVIE.COM
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE 31ST METRO MANILA FILMFESTIVAL
STAR
text SINE to 326

For every ticket purchase on January 1 get a FREE ticket to Enchanted Kingdom worth P500!
Promo good while supplies last. Available in Metro Manila only.
PER DTI LAGUNA PERMIT NO. S-12-435 SERIES OF 2005

THIS DECEMBER
THE ROBOTS WILL RULE
I, ROBOT
TV PREMIERE
STAR MOVIES
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SM CINEMA movietime
It's A Starry, Starry Film Fest At Sm Cinemas!
Box Office News Movie Schedules Live Events
SM Cinema CENTER Stage
FOR INQUIRIES

[illegible] Kutob at SM Cinemas

"Kutob" is a production of Canary Films and directed by Jose Javier Reyes from his own screenplay. The story starts with Erica (Rica Peralejo) having problems with Carlo's (Ryan Agoncillo) alleged infidelity. Erika's best friend, Mayen (Alessandra) tries to cheer her up by taking her to a fortuneteller, who warns her of dangers lurking around, warnings which Erika brushes aside. As differences between Erika and Carlo escalate, enter Lemuel (Marvin Agustin), Erika's friend who is secretly obsessing with her. After Erika reconciles with Carlo, deadly events start occurring. Is it just coincidence or are the fortuneteller's words are beginning to come true? Find out in theaters near you.

December 27
Here's your chance to meet and greet the stars of Kutob at the following SM Supermalls Fairview, Manila, Sta. Mesa, and Megamall

See "Kutob," See Your Future!
Watch Kutob on December 27, and 28 at SM Cinema Megamall, North Edsa, and Fairview, and know your future! Each movie-goer may ask two questions from a true-blue *Manghuhula* stationed at the cinema lobby.

WATCH and PLAY!
Get one (1) FREE Mobius Game Card for every two (2) ticket purchase when you watch at SM Cinema from December 25 to 29, 2005
The Mobius Game Card consists of 25 hours MU game time, 500,000 Gunbound Gold and 20 GoPets Shells
TERMS and CONDITIONS:
- For single purchase transaction only
- Applicable to Senior Citizen, SM Advantage and Banco De Oro rewards Plus card holders
- Not applicable to block screening reservations
- Not in conjunction with other promos

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 7289 Series of 2005
SM CINEMA

GUARANTEED SEATS

THE PODIUM 633-8976
1 Ako Legal Wife
2 EXODUS (Tales of the Enchanted Kingdom)

MEGAMALL
1 EXODUS (Tales of the Enchanted Kingdom)

CEBU (032) 231-3876
1 KING KONG
2 Ako Legal Wife
3 Enteng Kabisote 2

MANILA
6 EXODUS (Tales of the Enchanted Kingdom)

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 KUTOB
7 TERRORIST HUNTER
8 KUTOB
9 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
10 AKO LEGAL WIFE
11 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
12 MULAWIN THE MOVIE

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
8 KUTOB
9 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
10 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 KUTOB
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM VALENZUELA NOW OPEN
1 TERRORIST HUNTER
2 KUTOB
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 KUTOB
5 TERRORIST HUNTER
6 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
9 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
10 AKO LEGAL WIFE
11 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
12 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
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4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
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9 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
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4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
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8 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

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5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
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SM MOLINO NOW OPEN
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7 AKO LEGAL WIFE

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2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

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*FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MOVIE LISTING, MTRCB RATING, SCREENING SCHEDULES AND THE LATEST HAPPENINGS AT SM CINEMA

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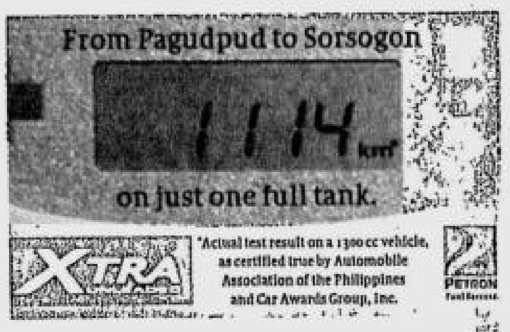
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Remittances seen hitting all-time high of $12.3B

20% to be sent through informal channels

By Doris C. Dumlao

REMITTANCES FROM OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS, including those sent through couriers, would likely hit an all-time high of $12.3 billion by year's end, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas estimated.

Of the total OFW inflows expected this year, some $10.7 billion or about 87 percent would come in through the banking system. The BSP was originally expecting the banking system to service only $10.3 billion in remittances this year.

OFW inflows coursed through the banks hit about $8.3 billion in 2004. The BSP assumes that at least 20 percent of total remittances were slipping past the formal channels in its balance-of-payments computation, but the so-called leakage is now being addressed.

Informal channels refer to unlicensed or unregulated operations such as friends, acquaintances or other travelers.

Based on the BSP's assessment, vigorous marketing efforts by commercial banks—such as enhanced money transfer services, more remittance centers and tie-ups with foreign financial institutions and collection agents—were encouraging more OFWs to send money to their local beneficiaries through the banking channels.

The BSP has been promoting the use of formal financial institutions as these are seen to provide accessible, timely and safe channels for remittance transactions and can help develop better savings habits of OFWs. For the authorities, better monitoring mechanisms and understanding of these flows are seen to facilitate better policy-making.

Based on a study on the Mexican experience, remittances held as deposits in the banking system had a beneficial multiplier effect of between two to three times as these could be channeled to investments, including small and microbusinesses.

But according to recent government surveys, the OFW inflows eluding the banking system had now fallen as a ratio of total inflows to less

REMITTANCES/ B2

NINOY Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 PDI PHOTO

DESPITE ARBITRATION CASES

Naia 3 to open in 1st half of '06

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION and Communication has vowed to open and operate the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 before the second half of 2006, a senior government official said.

DOTC Assistant Secretary Robert Castañares said the government would really have to compensate Philippine International Air Terminals Co. Inc. or Piatco, the builder of Naia 3, and this was not an issue in operating the modern terminal.

The debate is on the amount of compensation and that this issue would have to be resolved by the arbitration courts, he pointed out.

"Pending the results of arbitration, the government has the option to open and operate the terminal even before the amount of just compensation is determined," Castañares said. "We believe public interest is paramount."

A common interpretation of the Supreme Court decision in 2003 when it nullified Piatco's contract in 2003 was that the government must settle the just compensation first before it can operate the terminal.

However, the DOTC executive said the only issue that could delay the opening of Naia 3 in the first semester of 2006 would be construction-related.

Raising the money for just compensation, he noted, would not be a problem. The state-owned Development Bank of the Philippines had offered to raise between P15 billion and P27 billion for the Manila International Airport Authority so that the government could pay Piatco.

The DOTC said the airport authority could outsource portions of the operations of Naia 3 like housekeeping, security and ground handling.

Miaa general manager Alfonso Cusi assured that completion work at Naia 3

NAIA 3/ B2

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Household Energy Consumption
(As of August 2005)

Source: National Statistics Office's 2004 Household Energy Consumption Survey

ELECTRICITY, which is consumed by 87.6 percent of total households in the country or about 14.6 million households, is the main source of energy. Ninety-two percent is used for lighting, 85.4 percent for TV and radio, 66.6 percent for air conditioning and 51.3 percent for ironing.

Chona Galang, PDI Research

Excise taxes from oil down 41%

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT'S EXCISE TAX COLLECTION from petroleum products dropped by about 41 percent in November compared with the year-ago level and fell short of the official target.

The significant drop in the collection of excise taxes on petroleum last month came with the implementation of the VAT Reform law last Nov. 1. The new VAT law contained a provision requiring the lifting of excise taxes on petroleum products to ease the impact of the imposition of the value-added tax on the previously VAT-exempt oil.

Data from the Department of Finance, head agency of the BIR, showed that the BIR's excise tax collection reached P1.04 billion in November, or P716.9 million lower than the P1.76 billion collected in the same month last year.

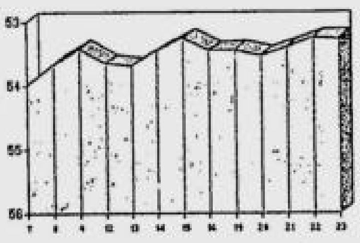
The latest excise tax collection figure was also P530.88 million short of the P1.57-billion target revenues from excise taxes on petroleum.

But fiscal authorities said the decline in ex-

EXCISE/ B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



DECEMBER

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 53.27 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 23, 2005

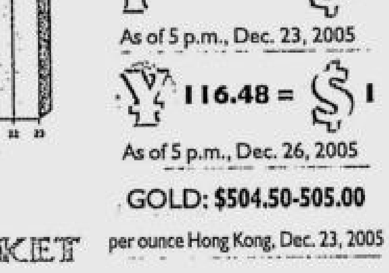
¥ 116.48 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 26, 2005

GOLD: $504.50-505.00
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 23, 2005

STOCK MARKET

Bright prospects seen for 2006

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

LOCAL ONLINE BROKER 2TradeAsia.com sees the Philippine economy growing by 5.3 to 5.5 percent this year, although slightly slower than the 6.1 percent recorded in 2004, the highest growth rate posted since 1996.

2TradeAsia wrote in its market outlook report that driving the growth would be the services and industry sectors with contributions from mining, construction and finance.

Personal consumption, however, could decelerate depending on the movement in global oil prices.

The economic outlook next year is also seen to improve with higher direct investments in highly capital-intensive sectors, better deployment of government funds, expected lower interest rates and a stronger peso.

The broker also said it was also encouraged by the fact that the fiscal deficit has fallen below the P197.8-billion ceiling, or 4.2 percent of GDP, to P122.2 billion as of November.

"All told these are seen to prompt credit-rating upgrades for the country, which should cap further increases in interest rates and assist investment prospects," 2TradeAsia wrote.

Meanwhile, investors will check whether the government will impose a higher expanded value-added tax starting in February, a move that could improve GDP growth by another one to 1.5 percent based on consensus forecast.

In terms of prospects for the consumer sector, it said growth in consumer spending in the third quarter had been limited by higher prices of goods and services, even with the influx of overseas Filipino workers' remittances.

Personal consumption grew 4.8 percent in the third quarter from 5.5 percent in the same period last year as cutbacks were noted in beverages, clothing and footwear and household furnishings.

"Aggressive marketing budgets might be noted for 2006 as companies try to come up with affordable pricing schemes either to retain or capture sizeable share in consumers' pockets," the brokerage wrote.

Aside from this, pass-on charges arising from the VAT will be monitored closely, specifically on its effect on sales volume for prime items.

2TradeAsia also said higher corporate income taxes at 35 percent from 32 percent would reduce earnings per share by between 4 and 5 percent unless measures were put in place to improve corporate sales.

As far as consumer-listed firms are concerned, mergers and acquisitions will continue to be the main theme to expand market share.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Siemens unit to open RP call center

By Ronnel W. Domingo

GERMAN FIRM Siemens AG's local subsidiary is set to start operation of its P215-million call center to deliver information technology help desk and customer services, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said Siemens Inc.'s venture was part of an agreement with affiliate Siemens Business Services (SBS) to serve customers worldwide, particular those in English-speaking countries.

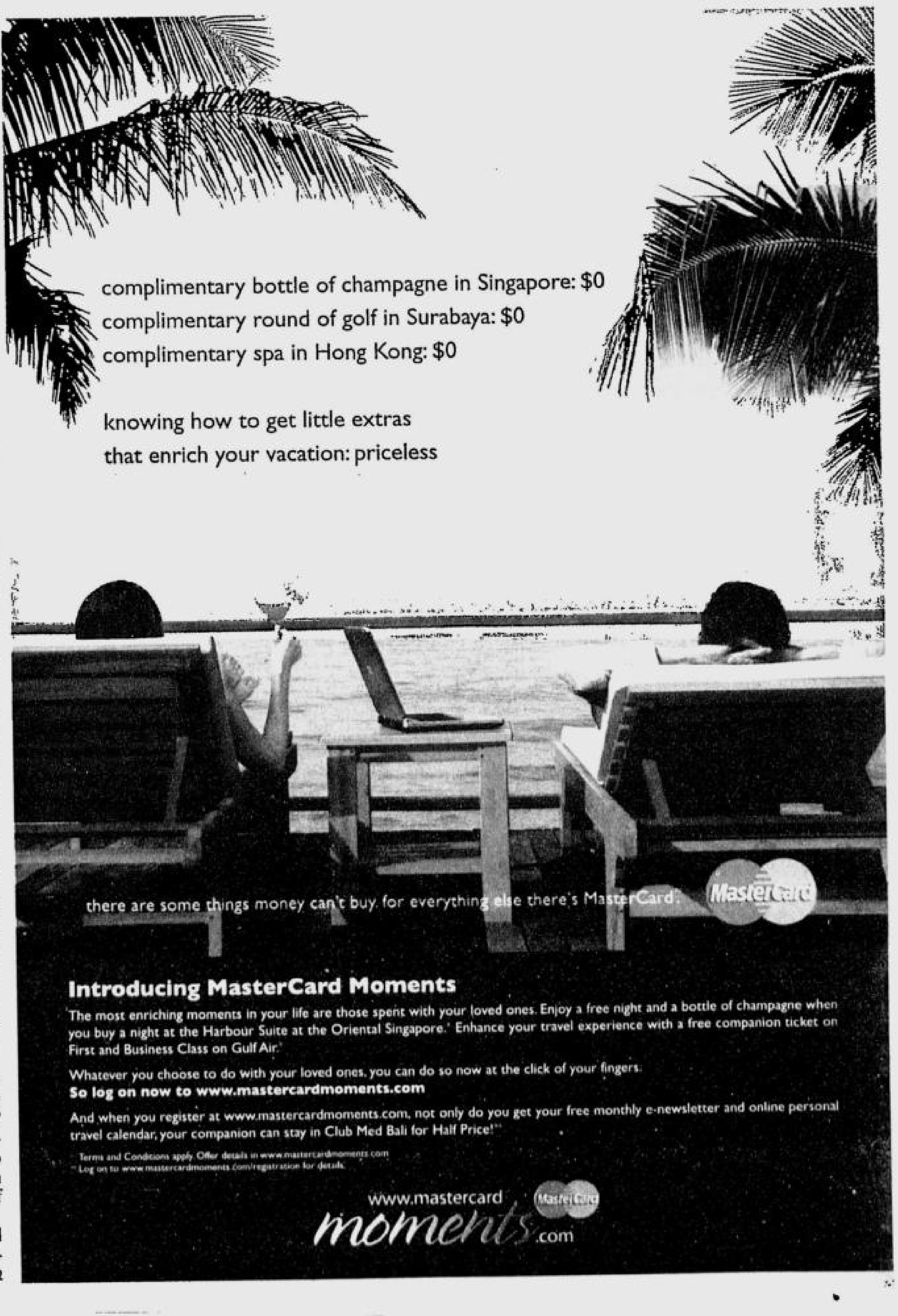
"The call center would have an initial 500 seats and is scheduled to open on Jan. 17 in East City Cyber Park in Quezon City," Favila said.

He said that with the establishment of a Siemens call center, the country became the latest addition to the list of satellite call center offices of SBS, with the others being in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Canada, Turkey and Singapore.

According to the DTI, SBS is among the world's top 10 IT service providers offering consulting to systems integration up to management of IT infrastructure.

"We are grateful for Siemens recogniz-

SIEMENS/ B2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$2-B BOP surplus seen in '06

Chowking sets aside P300M for expansion

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

CHOWKING FOOD CORP., the largest Oriental fast food chain in the country, will set aside roughly P300 million to expand its local store network by 26 to 36 stores in 2006.

According to Chowking president Rufino dela Rosa, the fast food chain expects to end 2005 with 335 local stores.

Prospects are bright in the last quarter of 2005, with a stronger peso boosted by higher overseas workers' remittances, Dela Rosa said.

"We are optimistic about the industry," Dela Rosa said. "But whether the economy remains flat or not, we can open at least 26 stores next year."

Chowking, a unit of fast food giant Jollibee Foods Corp., is also on track in opening around 18 new stores in the United States, Dubai and Indonesia next year, Dela Rosa said.

Chowking aims to close the year with around 19 stores: 10 stores in the US, 6 stores in Dubai and three in Indonesia.

Also, the firm will soon decide whether to go on its own or find a joint venture partner for its proposed venture into India, Asia's fourth biggest economy.

Despite an environment of increasing fuel, labor and utility costs, Chowking sees its business weathering tough times, with sales expected to grow briskly by at least 13.9 percent this year to P8.2 billion from P7.2 billion in 2004.

With the opening of around 36 stores, Chowking aims to boost sales to P9.2 billion in 2006.

Chowking was founded in early 1985, at a time when burger chains were the dominant players in the Philippine fast food landscape.

In 1989, in a bid to expand its client base and capture a bigger share of the market, the company initiated its franchising operations and marked its entry into the provincial market. The twin moves enabled the company to pursue an expansion program that has made it the largest Oriental quick service restaurant chain.

BSP notes better outlook for exports next year

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas expects the country's balance-of-payments account in 2006 to yield a surplus of about $2 billion, or the same as this year's.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo told reporters that the inflow of foreign exchange, especially from overseas Filipino workers, investments and export earnings, would allow the country to sustain the strong surplus recorded this year.

The BSP was originally expecting a BOP surplus of only $900 million for 2006.

For this year, Guinigundo estimated that the country would end the year with a BOP surplus of about $2 billion.

"In the past, we had difficulty bringing in foreign exchange because of the turbulent times. But now OFW remittances are surging; there's better outlook for exports next year and investment flows will continue to be heavy because of the increase in VAT (value-added tax)," he said.

The VAT reform is the single biggest fiscal measure deemed by investors as necessary to stabilize the government's cash budget.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account and the capital and financial account.

The current account records trade in goods and services as well as cash transfers, such as from migrant workers while the capital and financial accounts include foreign investment flows.

Any transaction which gives rise to a payment by a Philippine resident like importation is a deficit item in the BOP while any transaction which gives rise to a receipt like exporting or inward remittance is a surplus item.

Guinigundo said the country would be able to replicate the BOP surplus expected for this year even if the government were planning to reduce new foreign borrowings.

This year, proceeds from global bond issuances helped shore up the BOP position.

The BSP itself now favors the national government's shift to more domestic borrowings because of ample foreign exchange inflows supporting the exchange rate and its foreign reserves. With the rapid growth in domestic liquidity, partly due to strong inflows from OFWs, the BSP said the government could now reduce its reliance on external borrowings.

"There will be more foreign exchange available to the market. That offers opportunity for the national government to buy from the local market and their propensity to borrow will be much lower. As a result, the share of domestic borrowings (in the borrowing mix) will increase," Guinigundo said.

The country posted a BOP surplus of $2.73 billion from January to September, but the payment of external debts maturing before the year ends is expected to trim the surplus for the year. The latest yearend forecast of a $2-billion surplus would still exceed the government's official target of $853 million and would be a turnaround from the $300-million deficit incurred in 2004.

2 picked out for Dinagat mine project

By Christine A. Gaylican

STATE-OWNED NATURAL RESources Mining Development Corp. (NRMDC) has selected United Philippines-China Mining Corp. and Philnico Processing Corp. to be its joint venture partners in the P2-billion development of the Dinagat Island chromite reservation.

The two mining firms have given the highest bids for the development of the chromite reservation in the Northern Surigao island. The two project areas in Dinagat cover 9,775 hectares, the NRMDC's bids and awards committee said in its report.

United Philippines-China Mining Corp. will work on the 600-hectare area in Barangay Esperanza, Lorenzo. The Filipino-Chinese mining firm will also join Philnico Processing Corp. in developing the second area covering 9,175 hectares on the southern tip of the island.

All the bids were evaluated by the NRMDC committee's technical board. The technical board's recommendation, in turn, was checked by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The NRMDC is the corporate mining arm of the DENR. The Development Bank of the Philippines, which serves as the financial adviser of the government agency, urged DENR to pursue strategic joint venture arrangements with interested partners for the Dinagay project.

NRMDC president Artemio Disini said that, at the moment, 1,000 miners are now undertaking small-scale operations on the project site.

Based on a United Nations Development Program study, there are significant chromite and copper deposits in the reservation.

"We believe it is time for us to develop the potential of the Dinagat Island mine reserve, to take advantage of the big demand for chromite and copper in China," Disini said.

Napocor expects to be in the black in '05

By Abigail L. Ho

WITH ONLY A FEW DAYS LEFT in the year, the state-run National Power Corp. believes that it will be in the black this year, after suffering huge losses since 1998.

"The least is (for Napocor to) break even this year and even next year," said Lorna Dy, Napocor senior finance department manager. "We just have to either maintain or improve that."

One of the biggest factors contributing to the state firm's recovery from last year's losses—pegged at P29.9 billion—was the strengthening of the peso against the greenback, Dy said.

The Napocor finance department's projections were based on a foreign exchange rate of P56 to a dollar, she said.

If the current trend continues and the peso strengthens to P53 to a dollar, she said the state firm could even manage to post a net income.

According to projections that the Napocor finance department made in the middle of the year, a turnaround for the first time since 1998 could be attributed mainly to the reduction in the state firm's interest expenses to P22.64 billion from P30.25 billion last year.

The reduction in interest charges stems from the government's absorption last year of Napocor's debts, amounting to P200 billion.

Napocor president Cyril Del Callar said the strengthening of the peso would really make a huge difference for the state firm, as 95 percent of its debts were either dollar- or yen-denominated.

Apart from the stronger peso, the Energy Regulatory Commission's approval of Napocor's petition to hike rates in April will also contribute to the state firm's good performance this year.

"Our target is to bring (Napocor) back to profitability," Del Callar said. "With the reforms that we have put in place, we are optimistic that we will be able to meet our targets."

Naia 3 to open . . .

From page B1

would be finished by the first quarter and that barring any legal hitches, the new terminal would be opened by the second quarter.

The Miaa has advanced $10 million to Japanese firm Takaneka Corp. so the latter could start the completion work at the terminal. Making the Naia 3 fully operational would require between $50 million and $100 million.

The business community said the opening of Naia 3 was crucial for the Arroyo administration's credibility. Naia 3 is designed to handle 28 aircraft at any given time and 13 million passengers a year.

The government had originally planned to open Naia 3 last June 21 after it took over the facility in December 2004.

But a protracted deal with Takenaka and lack of clear direction on just compensation delayed the commercial operations of the terminal.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza said the government would open the Naia 3 within the first half of 2006 and that the government was looking at a just compensation of about $300 million to Piatco.

Piatco and its majority owner, Fraport of Germany, have separate claims in arbitration courts in Singapore and in Washington DC. The consortium said it built Naia 3 at a cost of $650 million.

Piatco's bid to retake the project is being challenged by Lucio Tan's Asia's Emerging Dragon Corp. or AEDC, the original proponent of the Naia 3 project until Piatco challenged its bid in 1996. The Supreme Court nullified the government's contract with Piatco in 2003.

Castañares said that as far as the DOTC was concerned, it had no intentions of immediately privatizing Naia 3.

"In fact, if Miaa manages the terminal well and becomes profitable, there is no need to sell it," he said.

He said neither Emilio Yap's Manila Hotel Corp. or Lucio Tan's AEDC were being considered in the Naia 3 project.

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Remittances . . .

From page B1

than 20 percent from a high of 30 percent in the past. A study by the Asian Development Bank noted that about 38 percent of recipients in the Philippines still preferred the informal method, primarily due to lower transaction costs.

Tetangco said the country's remittance system has significantly improved, with banks now using state-of-the-art technology to lower the fees and charges and better compete with the informal couriers.

From a stop-gap measure initiated by the government to curb unemployment in the 1970s, overseas employment has developed into a vital industry generating foreign exchange exceeding foreign investment inflows.

There are about eight million OFWs deployed abroad or about 10 percent of the population, of which three million are permanent residents. The five million OFWs who are not permanent residents were as large as 14 percent of the country's labor force.

Siemens unit to open . . .

From page B1

ing the competitive advantage of the country in hosting its outsourcing services," Favila said. "I am sure (the company) would be satisfied with the infrastructure, quality of work and the human resources available in the country."

The trade chief explained that the investment was a result of the DTI's as well as the Board of Investments' promotion of the country as a call center location.

"We are intensifying efforts to promote the IT-enabled services sector in Europe and the United States," he said. "Our target (market) are multinational companies that are in need of outsourcing services such as help desks, financial services and medical transcription."

Meantime, Businessman Raul T. Concepcion has urged the government to review its policy on giving incentives to call centers, claiming this was not needed.

"The BOI should examine whether the incentives are really necessary because the foreign investors seem to be coming to the country even without them," Concepcion said.

Concepcion, an active member of various business organizations, said the lower priced labor and the competitive quality of the work force available in the country were the main attractions in luring foreign investors in the call center sector.

According to BOI data, the agency had approved tax holidays and other fiscal and nonfiscal incentives for 30 call center projects since 1997.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Dec. 23, 2005)

Stocks	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	33.5	34	33.5	34	334,900
Bank of the Phil. Islands	55	56.5	55	56	665,700
China Banking Corp.	610	610	610	610	3,010
Citystate Savings Bank	17.75	18	17.75	18	1,600
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	57.5	59	57.5	59	150,600
International Exch. Bank	20.75	21	20.5	20.5	110,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	33	33	33	33	407,900
Philippine National Bank	31.5	32.5	31.5	32.5	8,200
Phil. Savings Bank	36	36	36	36	600
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14	14	14	14	2,000
Security Bank Corp.	33.5	33.5	33.5	33.5	36,600
Union Bank of the Phil.	32	32	32	32	65,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	140	140	140	140	310
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2100	2100	2100	2100	420
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	13	13	13	13	23,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.9	0.94	0.9	0.94	2,620,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	725	740	725	735	182,350
Ipeople Inc.	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	30,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.45	3.5	3.45	3.5	2,877,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1785	1815	1785	1815	37,950
Ivantage Corp.	0.58	0.59	0.58	0.59	3,500,000
Philweb Corp.	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.015	51,700,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	14.5	15	14.5	15	16,900
Manila Electric Co. B	22	22	21.75	21.75	138,400
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.3	6.4	6.3	6.4	7,488,000
Petron Corp.	4.4	4.55	4.4	4.55	3,725,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.94	0.96	0.94	0.96	340,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.72	1.74	1.72	1.72	335,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4	95,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	30,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.79	0.8	1,020,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	20,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.4	4.4	4.35	4.4	997,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	83,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	22.25	22.75	22.25	22.75	24,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	42	42	42	42	248,700
Pancake House Inc.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	5,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64.5	64.5	64	64.5	53,700
San Miguel Corp. B	87	88.5	86.5	88.5	138,400
Universal Robina Corp.	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5	50,200
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	700,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	6,000,000
Ayala Corp.	315	320	315	320	147,520
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	470,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.9	4.95	4.9	4.95	83,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	9,300,000
APC Group Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	50,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.007	0.0065	0.007	11,000,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9	9	9	9	111,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.12	1.1	1.1	10,245,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	100,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.31	580,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.05	3.1	281,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.025	0.026	0.025	0.026	21,000,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	120,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	48	48.5	48	48.5	181,800
Global Equities Inc.	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	2,100,000
Ionics Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	11,000
Jardine Davies Inc.	22	22	22	22	2,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.35	3.4	2,481,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.48	1.48	1.48	1.48	5,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	400,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.26	1.28	1.26	1.26	2,101,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.35	5,330,000
Paxys Inc.	6	6.1	6	6	275,000
SM Investments Corp.	240	240	239	240	138,070
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Picop Resources Inc.	0.0825	0.085	0.0825	0.085	600,000
Pryce Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	500,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1	1.04	1	1.04	7,460,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.72	100,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	202,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.65	2.65	2.65	2.65	5,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	12.75	12.75	12.75	12.75	22,100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	9.5	9.5	9.4	9.4	97,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.8	10	9.8	10	2,227,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	260,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.96	1.96	1.94	1.94	74,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	950,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	100,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.41	0.42	0.41	0.42	200,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.36	1.38	1.36	1.38	2,504,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	600,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.28	2.3	2.28	2.28	58,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	100,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.6	9,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	182,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.1	8.3	8	8.3	4,264,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	40,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.5	5.8	5.5	5.8	100,000
Benguet Corp. A	7	7	7	7	2,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.215	0.22	0.215	0.215	6,930,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.245	0.25	0.245	0.25	2,460,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.018	0.019	0.018	0.018	50,700,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.028	8,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.005	0.0055	0.005	0.0055	75,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.36	1.36	1.34	1.34	1,481,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.68	1.72	1.68	1.72	4,877,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	26.5	27.5	26.5	27.5	282,900
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	100,000
OIL					
Interport Res.	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	3,000,000
Pacifica	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	1,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	25,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	1,500,000

CURRENCIES

December 23, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.842389	1.000000	53.2890
Japan	Yen	0.007218	0.008568	0.4566
United Kingdom	Pound	1.464325	1.738300	92.6323
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.108656	0.128986	6.8735
Switzerland	Franc	0.642016	0.762137	40.6135
Canada	Dollar	0.721841	0.856898	45.6632
Singapore	Dollar	0.504757	0.599197	31.9306
Australia	Dollar	0.616277	0.731582	38.9853
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.235047	2.653224	141.3877
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.224631	0.266660	14.2100
Brunei	Dollar	0.503249	0.597407	31.8352
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000086	0.000102	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.020586	0.024438	1.3023
UAE	Dirham	0.229359	0.272272	14.5091
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.187100	63.2594
Argentina	Peso	0.278246	0.330306	17.6017
Brazil	Real	0.362084	0.429830	22.9052
Denmark	Kroner	0.134085	0.159172	8.4821
India	Rupee	0.018661	0.022153	1.1805
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.222942	0.264655	14.1032
Mexico	New Peso	0.079051	0.093841	5.0007
New Zealand	Dollar	0.567839	0.674082	35.9212
Norway	Kroner	0.124160	0.147390	7.8543
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014103	0.016742	0.8922
South Africa	Rand	0.132716	0.157547	8.3955
Korea	Won	0.000829	0.000984	0.0524
Sweden	Kroner	0.105698	0.125474	6.6864
Syria	Pound	0.016228	0.019264	1.0266
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025363	0.030108	1.6044

Excise taxes . . .

From page B1

cise tax collection in November was not a surprise given the implementation of the new VAT law, or RA 9337, which contains provisions that required the mitigation of the impact of VAT on oil and electricity.

The new VAT law, considered a key measure in the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform agenda, basically imposed the VAT on previously exempted products like oil and electricity, and services including those of doctors and lawyers. The law will likewise raise the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent starting next year.

Aside from the removal of excise taxes, the reduction of the tariff rate on imported petroleum products from 5 to 3 percent was ordered by Malacañang through EO 440 as a mitigating measure against the VAT.

The Department of Finance estimated that both mitigating measures could result in at least P20 billion worth of lost potential revenues every year for the government. But the DOF said the amount of lost revenue was tolerable considering the huge additional income expected from the new VAT law.

Finance officials earlier projected that the new VAT law would generate at least P4 billion in November and December this year, and P81.4 billion annually starting 2006.

While excise tax collection from petroleum products dropped in November, the cumulative figure for the first 11 months was still positive. DOF data showed that excise tax payments for petroleum products grew by 6.5 percent to P17.68 billion from P16.61 billion in the same period last year. Excise tax collections from petroleum products for the first 11 months of the year was also higher than the 11-month goal of P13.61 billion by P4.07 billion.

TBWA\Santiago Mangada Puno wins the most Araw awards

TBWA\SANTIAGO MANGADA Puno, the 4As-Philippines' 2003 and 2004 Agency of the Year, emerged at the top of the metals table in the recently-concluded Araw creative festival of the 19th Philippine Advertising Congress held in Cebu City.

TBWA\SMP converted 29 metal winners out of 53 finalists with 3 golds, 8 silvers and 18 bronzes over a wider breadth of clients and award categories including interactive, design, TV, radio, press and outdoor.

Gold awards were garnered for Advil outdoor, KFC Chik'n Fillet radio and Gatsby print campaign series. Other agency clients winning metals included Pedigree, Caramba hot sauces, CineManila filmfest, Mister Donut, Samsung, Ayala commercial center group, Business World, Alaska powdered milk, Eye Bank Foundation, GlobeQuest, Absolut, Sinutab, Cribs Philippines, Hands On Manila, Philippine Star, Shangri-La and adidas.

This performance was a repeat of TBWA\SMP's top standing in the previous 18th Advertising Congress Araw festival held in Baguio City in 2003.

TBWA\Santiago Mangada Puno is part of TBWA Worldwide (www.tbwa.com), Advertising Age magazine's 2004 Global Agency Network of the Year, is one of the world's fastest growing top ten agency networks.

TBWA creates disruptive ideas for global clients, including Absolut, adidas, Apple, Beiersdorf, Häagen-Dazs, Henkel, Masterfoods, McDonald's, Michelin, Nissan and Sony PlayStation. In 2005, TBWA was recognized Most Awarded Agency Network in the World by The Gunn Report. TBWA has also been recognized, in 2005, as the most awarded network at the Clio Awards and for the second year in a row, as the most awarded network at Cannes, The One Show and Ad-Fest. TBWA has 239 offices in 75 countries, and approximately 8,300 employees worldwide.

TBWA Worldwide is a part of Omnicom Group Inc (www.omnicomgroup.com http://www.omnicomgroup.com/). Omnicom is a leading global advertising, marketing and corporate communications company. Omnicom's branded networks and numerous specialty firms provide advertising, strategic media planning and buying, direct and promotional marketing, public relations and other specialty communications services to over 5,000 clients in more than 100 countries.

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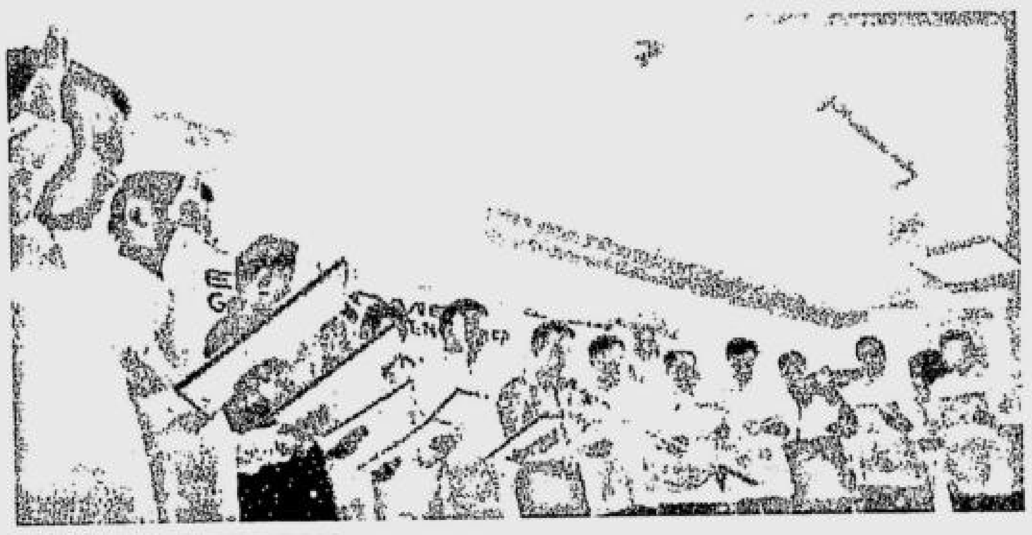
PHILAM HONORS LONGEST SERVING INSURANCE AGENTS

The Philippine American Life and General Insurance Co (Philamlife) recognized its most loyal career agents in an awards ceremony held at the Philamlife Tower Club in Makati City. The annual event, called Agency Service Awards, pays tribute to agents and agency managers who have served the company for 25 years or longer. Receiving the plum award for 50 years of service are agency managers Manuel Uson (2nd from left) and Proceso Mendoza (3rd from left). Alson in photo are Philamlife SVP and chief agency officer Ariel Cantos (leftmost) and Philamlife president and CEO Jose Cuisia Jr (right).



AMWSLAI INDUCTION

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso S. Senga (center) inducts the newly-elected Air Materiel Wing Savings and Loan Association Inc Board of Trustees at the association's main office in Murphy, Cubao, Quezon City. Inducted are board chair Col. Ricardo L. Nolasco, Jr., vice chair Brig. Gen. Ruben C. Estepa, corporate secretary Lt. Cedric V. Reyes, treasurer Col. Domingo E. Dimapilis Jr., auditor Lt. Morado O. Mercado, Colonels Antonio S. Gumba, Thaddeus P. Estallila, Ismael A. Abad and Angel E. Tapac, Maj. Rolando S. Cacabelos, and Retired 2nd Lieutenants Ricardo P. Perido and Cesar S. Toledanes. AMWSLAI is the second largest non-stock savings and loan association in the Philippines with over P15 billion in resources and more than 36 branches all over the country to serve its more than 260,000 members nationwide.

AIRASIA RECEIVES TRANSPORT COMPANY OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

AirAsia, the leading low fare airline in Southeast Asia, was presented with the Transport Company of Excellence Award at the annual Transport Industry Awards. AirAsia, recently named Forbes Asia's Best Under A Billion ; an annual listing of Asia's top 200 companies , was adjudge the winner at the awards night based on its excellent track record and well managed organization. The airline was also chosen because of its contributions towards innovative developments in the transport and logistics services. Photo shows Deputy Transport Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Tengku Azlan Abu Bakar presenting the Transport Company Excellence Award to Tony Fernandez, Group CEO, Air Asia.

6TH CEAP RETIREMENT PLAN
ASSEMBLY
THEME TOWARD REATING TAKE DERS V

CEAP RETIREMENT PLAN ASSEMBLY

Members of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) Retirement Fund recently met for the 6th Annual CEAP Retirement Plan Assembly held in Davao City. The CEAP Retirement Fund manages the retirement fund of the employees of over 600 Catholic schools nationwide. This year's theme is 'Towards Creating Shareholder Value' and focused on the Retirement Plan's goal to be the benchmark of the retirement plans of private schools. In photo are members of the CEAP Retirement Plan Commission, led by CEAP president Fr. Roderick Salazar, Jr., SVD (seated, fourth from left) and Investment Committee chairperson Sis. Lioba Tiamson, OSB (seated, third from right), with the assembly speakers and representatives from their trustee banks.

Banco de Oro is Asiamoney's Best Managed Company

BANCO DE ORO WAS VOTED "Best Managed Company in the Philippines-Mid Cap" for 2005.

Every year, Asiamoney conducts a poll to determine which are the best managed companies in each country. In the poll, all the companies are judged based on their performance over 2005. There is one winner for each of the 12 countries in the region. The yearly poll has 3 categories for the Best Managed Companies, these are: Small Cap Categories with capitalization of less than US$ 300 Million, Medium Cap Companies, with capitalization of more than US$ 300 Million but less than US$ 700 Million and the Large Cap Companies with over US$ 700 Million in capitalization.

Asiamoney spoke with all the key analysts/investors for each country. These investors/analysts tended to be the heads of research in that country, or senior (all-sector) fund managers/CIOs for the leading international and domestic players. By doing it this way, Asiamoney is able to provide a qualitative view as well as quantitative view of the corporates in the individual markets. Judging included a mix of factors: overall financial and business performance, management strategy and vision, IR/access to mgmt and transparency, corporate governance, focus on shareholder value and operational efficiency.

BDO, the country's sixth largest bank as of the end of the third quarter, is one of the fastest growing banks in the country. It has just acquired 66 UOB branches in the country. As of the end of September 2005, BDO's total assets stood at P212.28 Billion, a 34 percent increase over last year's assets while Deposits and Net Loans grew by 37 percent and 27 percent respectively.

Infostructure RD&E Crafts 2006 market offerings

INNOVATION LIVES ON IN THE hearts and minds of the talents of Infostructure Research, Design & Engineering (RD&E) Group. At this early, the InfoTalents are busy "road-mapping" the company's product offerings for 2006 and beyond.

Major enhancements as well as new product innovations are being lined up for the four platforms of "Digital Infostructure" -- the new name of Infostructure iTechnology -- namely BOS/e, iBOS/e, mBOS/e and XMiLe.

BOS/e, which is the Windows client/server platform, will be updated into BOS/e 2006 and will be grown with new applications categorized into BOS/e LOBs (line of business systems e.g. BOS/e Finest Restaurant and BOS/e Finest Drugstore); BOS/e CRM; BOS/e FIM (Financial Information Management); BOS/e SCM (Supply Chain Management); and BOS/e HCM (Human Capital Management e.g. BOS/e PeopleWARE and BOS/e PayFast).

iBOS/e, which is the web platform, will be updated into iBOS/e 2006. It will provide enterprise-class portal capabilities and new features that use RSS (Really Simple Syndication) and AJAX (Asynchronous Java Script XML) technologies. Upcoming technology upgrade of iBOS/e called .NJ will be revived as well.

mBOS/e, which is the mobile/wireless platform, will be updated into mBOS/e 2006. It will be composed of mBOS/e SMS Server and mBOS/e EasyText client.

XMiLe 2006, which is the remote desktop platform, will be comprised of My XMiLe, XMiLe Designer and XMiLe Server.

Infostructure's best-selling human capital management solution -- Infostructure Digital HCM -- powers the HCM teams at Philippines' Top 500 Corporations, among them are Bank of the Philippine Islands, Texas Instruments, McDonald's, Del Monte, Philam Group, Bank of Commerce, CalEnergy, United Laboratories, New Zealand Milk, and Merck.

For more information on Infostructure's products, you may call Edelyn Moratalla at (+63)(02) 8938844, (+63) (02) 8923325 or email at infostructure@eenterprise.net or visit www.infostructure.com.ph.

NORTEL CEO WELCOMES PLDT-SMART CEO IN OTTAWA

PLDT-Smart president and CEO Napoleon Nazareno completed a VIP tour of Nortel's laboratories and met with top executives at Nortel Ottawa. Nazareno (right) hosted by Nortel Phils managing director Antonio Pio de Roda met with top executives including Nortel's vice chair and CEO Bill Owens (left). Nazareno was updated about Nortel's strategies and research and development (R&D) priorities, emerging trends and Nortel's directions in optical, wireline and wireless technologies.

Product FILES

C2 Lite: The lighter way to quench your thirst

UNIVERSAL ROBINA Corporation (URC) now offers yet another healthy alternative to its consumers with the new sugar-free C2 Cool & Clean new Green Tea Lite! Like the original C2 variants, C2 Green Tea Lite is a ready-to-drink beverage brewed from natural green tea leaves of Camellia Sinensis, which is known for its cleansing, anti-oxidizing and curative properties. With two flavors to choose from, Green Tea Lite Plain and Green Tea Lite Lemon, C2 Green Tea Lite is low-calorie and contains the BFAD-approved sweetener Sucraclose for that sweet, yet sugar-free goodness. Available in 355ml bottles with re-sealable caps, C2 Green Tea Lite is available in sari-sari stores, supermarkets and convenience stores near you. Quench your thirst for a healthier lifestyle by drinking the new C2 Cool & Clean new Green Tea Lite today!

Rich Chinese cuisine comes to life in contemporary ambience

FROM A PREVIOUS CHINESE restaurant springs forth the Peony, China's traditional floral symbol, blossoming to proliferate its country's ancient and intricate cuisine.

Deep within the heart of Manila Pavilion Hotel rises the Peony Garden, a new restaurant that serves Chinese food in a grand fashion it well deserves.

Widely regarded as one of the richest and most diverse culinary heritages on Earth, Peony Garden offers Chinese food faithful to its basic form amid a stylish and contemporary designed ambience. Peony Garden focuses on southern China's cuisine-Cantonese, and with the prevalence of Chinese restaurants, what makes Peony Garden distinct is the subtle touch of Malaysian flavor in its menu.

Peony Garden displays by its entrance one large aquarium housing different kinds of live seafood: blue dotted, king, lapu-lapu, mameng, panther, crabs, lobster, and eels. This perhaps, is the best proof of freshness in Peony Garden dishes. From this tank, customers can request their choice of seafood for immediate preparation whether fried, sautéed, or steamed.

A full view of Peony Garden reveals a restaurant that is classy and homey. Its red, gold and earth color schemes are well illuminated by soft lights, thereby creating a very attractive look.

A waterfall or cascade flows at the rightmost wall to signify a prosperous future for the restaurant. Beside it are nine glass panels etched with Chinese designs, each depicting a different scene.

Soon, another scene will fill the corners of Peony Garden; that of satisfied diners who appreciate the rich culinary heritage of China coming alive in a contemporary setting.

The Peony Garden is open daily during lunch from 12 noon to 3 p.m. and dinner from 6:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. For inquiries, please call Manila Pavilion Hotel at 526-1212 extension 2303.

Manila Pavilion Hotel is now part of Waterfront Philippines Inc, the largest Filipino hotel chain in the country. It is located along United Nations Avenue corner Maria Orosa street, Ermita, Manila.

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONA

RED CROSS P1 MILLLION EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) Chair and CEO Richard J. Gordon (center) released P1 Million Educational assistance to be equally divided among the children beneficiaries of the victims of the helicopter crash of 2004 where PNRC Governor – Raymundo Punongbayan also perished. The simple turnover rites held at the PNRC Headquarters was attended by the wives and representative of the late Dr. Jessie Daligdig, Dr. Norman M. Tungol, Mr. Dindo V. Javier, Mr. Orlando S. Abengoza, Sr., S/Sgt. Edgar Ramolete, Lt. Jayson Salazar, A1C Whilbert Tacata and Lt. Reynaldo Gerodias.

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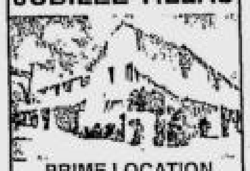

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PUBLIC NOTICES

Philippine Economic Zone Authority
Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis Street, Pasay City, Metro Manila Philippines
Telephones (632) 5513438 • 5513454 • Facsimile (632) 5513436
E-mail: info@peza.gov.ph • Website: www.peza.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), through its Corporate Operating Budget for CY 2005 intends to apply the sum of PhP2,342,253.58 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the ***Network Equipment and Structured Cabling for Head Office (Vertical Cabling only), BEZ and CEZ.*** Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The PEZA now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the: a) Head Office Structured Cabling (Vertical Cabling Only), b) Cavite Economic Zone Structured Cabling, c) Bataan Economic Zone Structured Cabling, d) Existing Head Office Router Upgrade, e) 3 Units Remote Router with Complete Accessories, f) 10 Units Edge Switches with Complete Accessories, and g) 15 units UPS (500VA) The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens / sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last five (5) years with an amount of at least 50% of the ABC. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested bidders may obtain further information from the BAC Secretariat and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from 21-29 December 2005, Mondays to Fridays, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of PhP 2,500.00 and submission of a certified copy of their G-EPS Certificate of Registration. The method of payment will be cash basis only. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The PEZA will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on 09 January 2006, 2:00 p.m. at the 6th Floor, Social Hall, Almeda Building III, Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis St., Pasay City.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before 11:00 a.m. of 23 January 2006. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of GSIS Surety Bond in the amount of not less than 2.5% of the ABC or in the form of cash, certified check, cashier's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit in the amount of not less than 1% of the ABC. Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be on 23 January 2006, 2:00 p.m. at the 6th Floor, Social Hall, Almeda Bldg., III Roxas Blvd. corner San Luis St., Pasay City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend
9. In case any of the above dates is declared a special non-working holiday, it will automatically be reset on the next working day.
10. The PEZA reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders

Philippine Economic Zone Authority
Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat
3/F Almeda Building III Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis St., Pasay City
Tel. No. 891-6444 / Telefax No. 551-9587
e-mail: peza_bac_secretariat@yahoo.com
website: www.peza.gov.ph

THE CHAIRMAN
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI–Dec. 21 & 27, 2005)

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For applicants who fit the above requirements, please send your CV with picture by email to rewgfmsdm@slb.com. Only e-mail applications will be reviewed. Tests/interviews for qualified candidates will be conducted on the 13th to 16th of-Jan-2006 in Manila.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

AUCTION SALE

JAC FILIPINAS PAWNSHOP INC. 100 C. Palanca St. Quiapo, Manila will sell all unredeemed pledges for the months of JUNE & JULY 2005 on JAN. 17, 2006 at 9am. J. Lanuza Auctioneer (PDI - DEC. 27, 2005)

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that
the estate of the late
CIRILO C. DELOS REYES, SR.
and CONCHITA FLORES
has been extrajudicially
settled by his heirs before
Notary Public Myrna Donado
Santiago of Cavite
as per Doc#380 Page#76
Book#LIV Series of 2005
(PDI-Dec.20,27, 2005 & Jan.3,2006)

PERSONAL

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(650) 967-1001
Attorney for Petitioner

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA

In the Matter of the Adoption Petition of SAMSON D. AGBAYANI Adopting Parent,) No. 105 A 019531) CITATION TO APPEAR AT HEARING (Family Code S8604b)

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
To LUISITO S. TABURADA:

YOU ARE CITED to appear at 9:00 a.m. on Feb. 10, 2006, in Department 60 of the above-entitled court, located at 115 Terraine Street, San Jose, California. At that time and place, you must show cause why the petition of SAMSON D. AGBAYANI to adopt your minor child, KACYS LUV F. TABURADA, should not be granted without your consent in the above-entitled proceeding, on the ground that you have abandoned that child. The adoption petition alleges that for a period of one year after April, 2003, you willfully failed to communicate with, and pay for the care, support and education of, the above child although you were able to do so. A copy of the petition is on file with the court.

YOU ARE FURTHER ADVISED that if you appear at the above hearing and wish to have legal counsel but are unable to afford counsel, the court will appoint counsel on your behalf.

Dated : Dec. 8, 2005 Clerk of the Superior Court
By : B. Forbes
Deputy Clerk

CITATION TO APPEAR AT HEARING

(PDI - Dec. 20 & 27, 2005 & Jan. 2 & 9, 2006)

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PERSONAL

PRAYER TO BLESSED MOTHER
(NEVER KNOWN TO FAIL)
Oh most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in this necessity. Oh star of the sea, help me and show herein you are my Mother. Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech You from the bottom of My Heart to succor me in this necessity. There are none that can withstand Your power. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recoursed to thee (3x). Holy Mother, I place this course in your hands (3x). Sweet Mother, I place this course in Your hands (3x). Holy Spirit, You who solve all problems so that I can attain my goal, You who gave me the divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me and that in all instances in my life You are with me. I want this short prayer. Thank you for all things as I confirm once again that I never want to be separated from You in eternal glory. Thank you for Your mercy towards me and mine. The person must say this prayer 3 consecutive days. After 3 days the request will be granted. This prayer must be published after the favor is granted.

WESTERN VISAYAS MEDICAL CENTER
Mandurriao, Iloilo City
Fax No. 321-1797
E-mail Address: wvmc@mozcom.com

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Department of Health (DOH) - Western Visayas Medical Center through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of the Project : Supply and delivery of Various Pharmaceuticals
Location : Western Visayas Medical Center
Brief Description : The Bidder shall provide the supply and delivery of Various Pharmaceuticals
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) : Php 36,902,333.80
Contract Duration : 6 months
Delivery Period : Within fifteen days after each receipt of Purchase Order

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the preliminary Examination of Bids shall be non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security Performance Security Pre-bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	December 26, 2005 – January 10, 2006
2. Pre-bid Conference	January 11, 2006
3. Submission of Letter of Intent and Application for Eligibility (if single-stage bidding is used, delete this activity)	N/A
4. Opening of Bids	January 26, 2006
5. Bid Evaluation	January 27, 2006 – February 11, 2006
6. Post-qualification	February 12, 2006 – February 19, 2006
7. Notice of Award	March 19, 2006

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Php 3,000.00 to the DOH-Western Visayas Medical Center cashier

The DOH-Western Visayas Medical center assumes no responsibility, whatsoever, to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Approved:
(Sgd.) FREIDA G. SORONGON, RN, MAN
BAC-Chairman

(PDI - December 20 & 27, 2005)

TRANSCO CEO GETS TWO CITATIONS FROM IABC/PHILS

National Transmission Corporation (TransCo) president and CEO Dr. Alan T. Ortiz (2nd from left) was recently recognized by the International Association of Business Communicators Philippines (IABC/Phils) for his exemplary communication skills which has helped transform the state-owned transmission firm into one of the best performing organizations in the country. Dr. Ortiz received an Excellence Award in the government category and a Merit Award in the utilities category in the recent CEO EXCEL awards mounted by the IABC. He was the only awardee to have been given citations in two different categories. Photo shows Dr. Ortiz with (from left) IABC director Edward King, IABC president Cosette Romero and IABC director Elpi Cuna.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2005

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Simeon A. de Jesus

Peacefully joined his Lord & Creator on December 17, 2005.

His loving family:
parents **Gen. Simeon de Jesus** (+) & **Victoria Andres de Jesus** (+);
his beloved wife **Maria Altavas Miraflores**;
children: **Javy & Marianne Villanueva, Joy & Lino Sugay**, and **Jimmy**;
grandchildren: **Andrew de Jesus, Noel, Timmy & Ann Sugay**;
brothers/sisters: **Jose** (+) & **Erlinda Tordesillas** (+), **Aida & Raul Consunji, Victor & Linda Kaltinsky, Alice & Peter Rieder**; sister-in-law **Linda Miraflores Liboro**; and relatives request the pious reader to pray for his eternal rest and everlasting happiness.

His cremated remains were laid to rest at the
Santuario de San Antonio, Makati.

I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4)

Guillermo Aquino Becina

Retired DECS Schools Superintendent for
Province of Laguna and San Pablo City

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on Christmas Day, December 25, 2005.

He will be missed by his wife, **AGNES INSON-BECINA**; sons **June-June, Jed, Jay** and **Justin**; **Dr. Gener** and **Dr. Gilmore**; only daughter **Atty. Fe Becina-Macalino**; son-in-law **Judge Florito S. Macalino**; daughters-in-law **Dee** and **Dra. Delle**; grandchildren **Paolo, Fatima, Monty, Ryan, Faye, Kim, Gary** and **Gio**; brothers and sisters and other relatives who request the readers to pray for his eternal rest.

His body lies in state at the San Pablo City Cathedral, San Pablo Laguna until 3 p.m. of December 28, 2005 and will be brought to the Immaculate Concepcion Parish, Sta. Cruz, Laguna from December 28-29, 2005.

Interment will be on December 29, 2005, Thursday, at 2 p.m. at the Garden of Peace Memorial Park, Bagumbayan, Sta. Cruz Laguna, following a Holy Eucharistic celebration of God's gift of eternal life unto him.

"I am the
way, the
truth and the
life. No one
comes to the
Father
except
through
Me."
John 14:6

COL ERNESTO B DE LEON

O-102997 VC (GSC) (Ret)

AFP GSC CLASS 36

Peacefully joined our Lord
on 25 December 2005 at the age of 61.

His loving family – wife **Imelda Ruiz**; sons and daughter-in-law **Benjie** and **Gwendolyn Sanchez**; and **Alan**; grandchildren **Errol Johne, Louise Mae**, and **John Louis**; parents **Adriano** (†) and **Purificacion**; brothers- and sisters-in-law; nephews and nieces; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Our Lady of Fatima Chapel, Ciudad Real Subdivision, San Jose del Monte City, Bulacan.

Interment will be at the Libingan ng Mga Bayani on December 29, 2005 after the 7 a.m. Mass.

An obituary with a picture
can be a fitting tribute to your
departed loved one.

"For God
so loved the world, that He gave His
only begotten Son, that whoever
believes in Him shall not perish but
have everlasting life."
John 3:16

Always caring...
INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:

➊ Copy of Death Certificate;
➋ Any identification document (I.D.)

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Isaac Disraeli

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Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR: (A) AUTHORITY TO UNBUNDLE RATES IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 36 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9136; AND (B) APPROVAL OF THE AUTOMATIC FUEL COST ADJUSTMENT (AFCA) WITH PRAYER FOR PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

ERC CASE NO. 2005 – 045 RC

CIP II POWER CORPORATION (CIPP)
Applicant.
x----------------------------x

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

Notice is hereby given of the filing on October 21, 2005 by CIP II Power Corporation (CIPP) of an application for: (a) authority to unbundle rates in accordance with Section 36 of Republic Act No. 9136; and (b) approval of the Automatic Fuel Cost Adjustment (AFCA) with prayer for provisional authority.

The Commission has set the said application for hearing on January 19, 2006 at nine o'clock in the morning (9:00 A.M.) at the ERC Hearing Room, 15th Floor, Pacific Center Building, San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City.

All interested parties who may wish to comment on or oppose the said application should file their comments and/ or oppositions on or before the date of hearing. Such parties who may wish to have the details of the application and who shall have manifested to the Commission their desire and intention to participate actively in the proceedings, may request that before the date of hearing, they be furnished with copies of the application by the applicant, which is hereby directed to furnish the parties making such request with copies of the application and its attachments. Likewise, any such interested party may examine the application and other pertinent records filed with the Commission during the usual office hours.

WITNESS, the Honorable **RODOLFO B. ALBANO, JR.**, Chairman, and the Honorables **OLIVER B. BUTALID** and **RAUF A. TAN**, Commissioners, Energy Regulatory Commission, this 11th day of November, 2005 at Pasig City.

(Sgd.) **MARIA TERESA A.R. CASTAÑEDA**
Executive Director III

(PDI-Dec 27, 2005 & Jan 3, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region VII, Cebu City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

WAREHOUSING SERVICES FOR NFA CEBU

LEASE OF A MAXIMUM AGGREGATE AREA OF 13,333 SQ. METERS FOR GRAINS WAREHOUSE STORAGE SPACE

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY**, through its *Corporate Budget for 2006*, intends to apply the sum of **PESOS: TEN MILLION NINE HUNDRED THIRTY THREE THOUSAND and SIXTY** (Ps.10,933,060.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the lease of a maximum aggregate area of 13,333 sq.meters for grains warehouse storage space for NFA Cebu City. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY** now calls for the submission of Letter of Intent (LOI) from potential bidders to apply first for the accreditation of the warehouse(s) intended to be leased as grains warehouse storage space for NFA Cebu City prior to the issuance of Bidding Documents.

Interested Bidders shall submit their Letter of Intent (LOI) to the BAC Secretariat together with the following warehouse accreditation requirements: a) Certificate of Occupancy; b) Proof of Warehouse Ownership; c) Floor Plan of Warehouse; and d) Location Map / Sketch Plan.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the BAC Secretariat, NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY, Banilad, Cebu City.

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY** will issue the complete set of Bidding Documents only to prospective bidders who had been issued a Notice of Warehouse Accreditation by BAC and upon payment of a non-refundable amount of PESOS: THREE THOUSAND (Ps. 3,000.00). The Bidding Documents shall be reviewed personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedure using non-discretionary pass / fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138)

Following is the schedule of bidding activities:

ACTIVITY	**SCHEDULE (Date/Time)**
1. Submission of Letter of Intent (LOI)	December 20, 2005 – January 03, 2006
2. Issuace of Notice of Accreditation/ Non-Accreditation and Issuance of Bidding Documents	December 20, 2005 – January 05, 2006
3. Pre-Bidding Conference	January 06, 2006 @ 10:00 AM
4. Opening of Bids	January 19, 2006 @ 10:00 AM

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in an amount at least equal to, and not lower than a percentage of the Approved Budget for the Contract to be bid, in the following schedule and form or any combination thereof:

Form of Security	**Minimum Amount in % of ABC to be Bid**
Cash/Cashier's/Manager's Check Payable to NFA issued by a reputable Commercial Bank in Cebu City or	One Percent (1%)
Surety Bond issued by GSIS marked "Callable on Demand"	Two & a Half Percent (2.5%)

Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders or their respective representatives who choose to attend the bidding. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

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BUSINESS

Enron exec in plea talks

Defection said to be crucial for Federal prosecutors

HOUSTON—PROSECUTORS AND attorneys for Enron Corp.'s former chief accounting officer, Richard Causey, are in negotiations on a plea bargain on the eve of trial for founder Kenneth Lay and former CEO Jeffrey Skilling, according to people familiar with the discussions.

If Causey agrees to a deal to plead guilty, his cooperation could prove enormously helpful to the US government's case against Lay and Skilling. All three face trial next month.

The discussions are ongoing and there is no guarantee any agreement will be reached, according to two people familiar with the discussions. They spoke on condition of anonymity because of the private nature of the talks. The process could still crumble before the fraud and conspiracy trial begins with jury selection on Jan. 17.

Any deal with Causey, 45, could provide prosecutors a potentially devastating witness against Lay and Skilling—even more so than assistance from former finance chief Andrew Fastow, who pleaded guilty in January 2004 to two counts of conspiracy.

Fifteen other ex-Enron executives have pleaded guilty to various crimes, including securities fraud and insider trading. Causey, Lay and Skilling have pleaded not guilty.

"Causey's defection essentially on the eve of trial would be a huge blow to Skilling and Lay," Robert Mintz, a former federal prosecutor, said Sunday. "A last-minute deal for Causey would signal weakness precisely at the time that these defendants are trying to project strength."

Enron crashed in December 2001 upon revelations of hidden debt and inflated profits, leaving thousands out of work, and roiling Wall Street with billions of dollars in investor losses.

Causey, Skilling and Lay are accused of conspiring to fool investors into believing a wobbly Enron was healthy.

The 34 charges against Causey include fraud, conspiracy, lying to auditors, money laundering and insider trading. The people who confirmed the plea talks couldn't say to which of those counts he might plead guilty.

Causey was fired in February 2002 after an internal probe concluded he failed to adequately protect Enron's interests.

Skilling was added to the indictment in February 2004, followed by Lay five months later.

Lay is charged in a separate case with bank fraud and lying to banks about his intention to use loans to buy stock on margin.

Causey has been free on $1-million bond since he was indicted. *AP*

Dollar higher against yen in Asia trade

TOKYO—THE DOLLAR YESTERDAY rose modestly against the yen in Asia on buying from Japanese importers, while investors awaited Japanese inflation data due today for clues about the Bank of Japan's future monetary policy.

The US dollar was trading at 116.48 yen on the Tokyo foreign exchange market at 3 p.m. (0600 GMT) Monday, up 0.16 yen from late Friday in New York.

Trading was quiet partly as investors avoided tilting positions ahead of US and UK holidays yesterday and the Japanese nationwide consumer price index data due today, dealers said.

Economists polled by Dow Jones Newswires expect the core consumer price index, which is a measure of retail prices excluding volatile fresh food prices and is the Bank of Japan's preferred inflation gauge, to rise 0.1 percent from a year earlier in November.

Such a result would mark the first rise since 1998, and would suggest that the world's second-biggest economy is escaping deflation.

Japan's government, fearing any increase in its huge debt-financing costs due to a change in central bank policy, has been calling for the BOJ not to hurry to change its monetary policy.

The dollar was higher against other Asian currencies. It rose to 1.6659 Singapore dollars from 1.6650 last Friday, and to 33.132 Taiwan dollars from 33.126. *AP*

Day after Christmas, stores slash prices to grab shoppers

NEW YORK—WITH A HO-HUM PRE-CHRISTmas season behind them, the nation's retailers ushered in the post-Christmas period yesterday with expanded shopping hours, a blitz of deep discounts and fresh new merchandise.

Retailers are aiming directly at consumers who are returning to the stores armed with their gift cards, whose popularity is soaring.

Merchants are hoping that consumers will pick up some discounted holiday leftovers while buying some regular-priced goods. That will help retailers preserve profits and recoup lost sales from earlier in the season.

"We're resetting as quickly as possible," said Gail Lavielle, a spokesperson at Wal-Mart Stores Inc. "We are putting a lot of emphasis on what you need for the stuff you got."

Michael P. Niemira, chief economist at the International Council of Shopping Centers, expects the week after Christmas to be "big." But he still believes that merchants will wind up with a modest 3 percent to 3.5 percent sales increase for the November-December period.

The estimate is based on same-store sales, which are sales at stores open at least a year. But Niemira added that if more shoppers than expected redeem their gift cards this week, that could boost December sales by 0.75 percentage point.

The National Retail Federation estimates that consumers will spend $18.48 billion (euro15.58 billion) on gift cards, this holiday season, up 6.6 percent from a year ago, based on a survey conducted by BIGresearch. *AP*

Tsunami-hit countries rebound

BEIJING—VISA CARD-HOLDERS ARE NOW spending more in most of the countries struck by last year's tsunami than in the period just before the disaster, the payments company yesterday said.

Visa said card-holder spending in the tsunami-affected markets as a whole grew by about 8 percent from a year earlier during the week ending Dec. 11, the same as for all of the Asia-Pacific region.

"It is a good sign for 2006 that these holiday destinations are now welcoming guests at sustainable levels," James Murray, Visa Asia Pacific's executive vice president for South and Southeast Asia, said in a statement.

Tourist spending in the week ending Dec. 11 was up 23 percent from a year earlier in India and 12 percent in Thailand. Even Phuket, which had a tough time recovering from the Dec. 26, 2004 tsunami, reported 8 percent growth, Visa said.

Visitors to Malaysia and the Maldives also charged more to their Visa cards during the week than a year earlier, the payments processing firm said.

But for the four weeks ending Dec. 11, tourist spending in Indonesia and Sri Lanka was down 2 percent and 11 percent, respectively.

Murray said high fuel costs and global terrorism concerns had contributed to instability in the region's tourism market. *Reuters*

China central bank to issue $6.2B

SHANGHAI—CHINA'S CENTRAL BANK WILL issue up to 50 billion yuan ($6.2 billion) in one-year bills in open market operations today, up from 35 billion from a week ago, Chinese authorities yesterday said.

Yields on the bills would be decided by a public tender today, the People's Bank of China said in a statement on its Web site (www.pbc.gov.cn), detailing the planned issue.

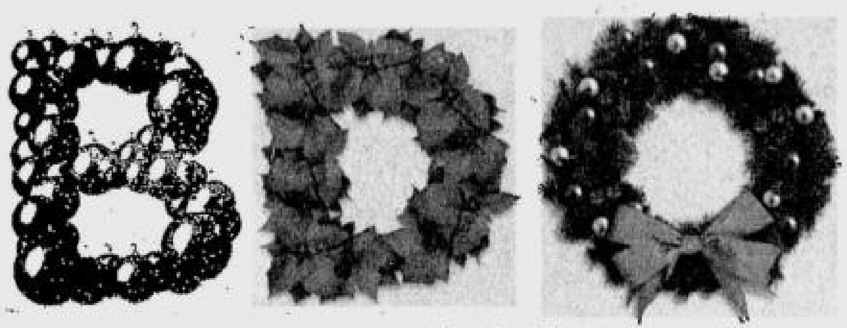
The central bank does not announce the planned amount for trading in repurchase agreements on the open market, though it absorbed 5 billion yuan by entering into 14-day reverse repos.

The central bank has strengthened its efforts to tighten liquidity on the banking systems since mid-October as it has tried to rein in money-supply growth.

China's M2 money supply grew 18.3 percent in the year through November, accelerating from 18.0 percent in the 12 months to October, and topping a targeted growth rate of 17 percent for all of 2005.

The central bank conducts open-market operations with banks, insurers, brokerages and rural credit cooperatives on China's national interbank market in Shanghai.

The central bank typically issues one-year bills each Tuesday and three-month bills each Thursday. Bills of other maturities will be sold as and when necessary, it said. *Reuters*



Happy Holidays

BANKING SCHEDULE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

December 24 (Saturday)
All Saturday Banking Branches are open up to 3:00 pm

December 26 (Monday)
- OPEN UP TO 4:00 PM

Arranque
Aurora Blvd
Baclaran
Bacolod-Gonzaga
Baguio
Banawe
Bonifacio Global City
Caloocan
CDO-Cogon
Cebu-Elizabeth Mall
Cebu-Magallanes
Dagupan
Davao-Magsaysay
Echague
Gandara
Greenhills
Harrison Plaza
Ilaya
Legaspi City
Lipa
Manggahan
Marcos Highway
Marikina
Naga
Quintin Paredes
Rizal Avenue
Sto. Domingo
Tabora
Talon, Las Piñas
Tarlac
Timog
Tutuban

- OPEN UP TO 5:00 PM All SM Mall & Department Store branches

December 30 (Friday)
- OPEN UP TO 1:30 PM

Aurora Blvd
Bacolod-Gonzaga
Baguio-Session Road
Carmen Planas
CDO-Cogon
CDO-Xavier
Cebu-Magallanes
Dagupan
Davao-JP Laurel
Echague
Harrison Plaza
Iligan
Legaspi City
Lipa
Manggahan
Marcos Highway
Marikina
Naga
Ortigas Avenue
San Pedro
Talon, Las Pinas
Tarlac
Tomas Morato
Zamboanga

- OPEN UP TO 3:00 PM All SM Mall & Department Store branches plus the following branches:

Baclaran
Bonifacio Global City
Caloocan
Cebu-Elizabeth Mall
Rizal Avenue
Tacloban
Tutuban

December 31 (Saturday)
- OPEN UP TO 1:30 PM

Alabang
CDO-Xavier
Cebu-Gullas
Cebu-Tabunok
Davao-Monteverde
Echague
Greenhills
Iloilo-Iznart
Pamplona
Head Office (till 2:00 PM)

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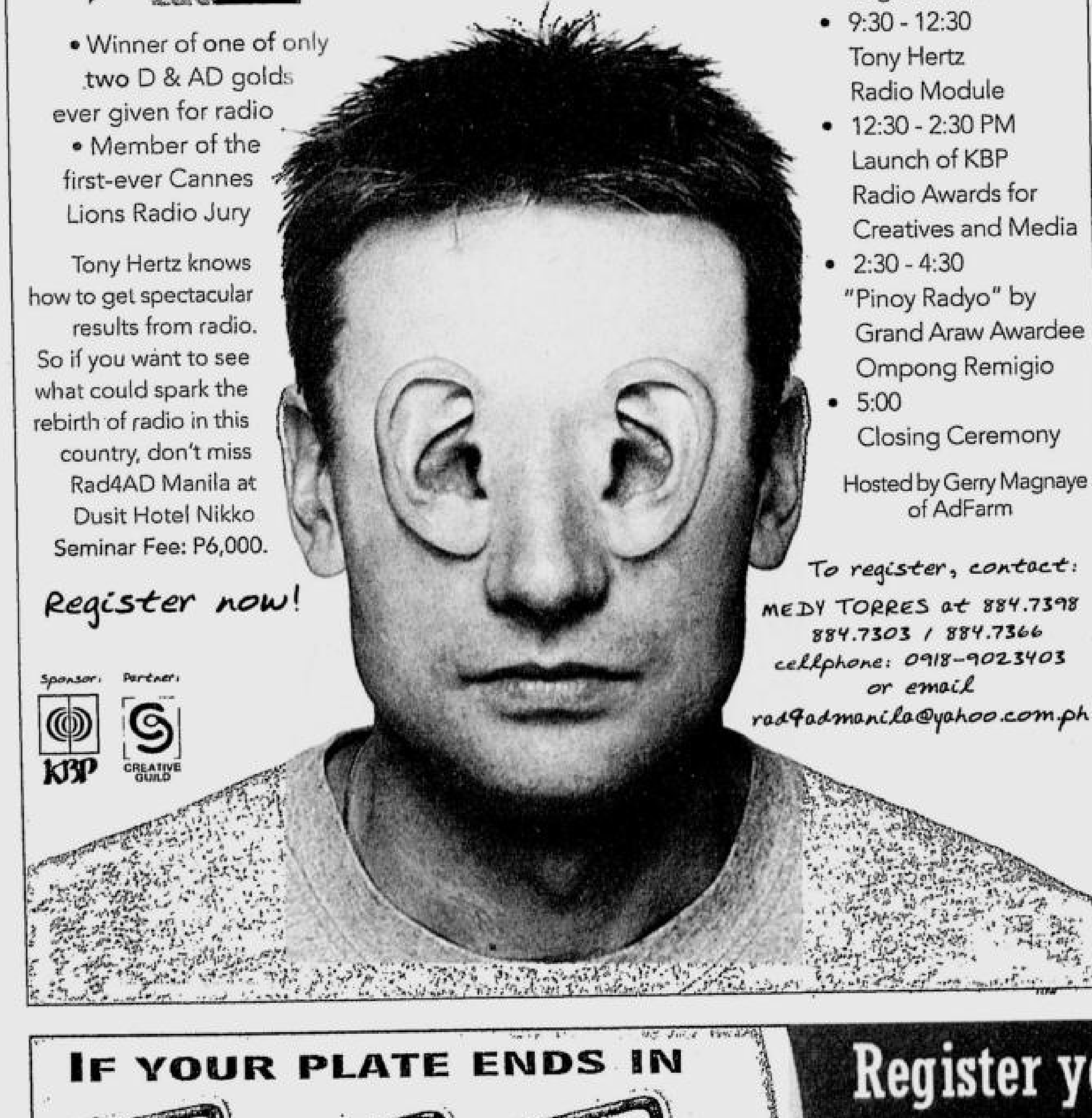

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- 9:30 - 12:30 Tony Hertz Radio Module
- 12:30 - 2:30 PM Launch of KBP Radio Awards for Creatives and Media
- 2:30 - 4:30 "Pinoy Radyo" by Grand Araw Awardee Ompong Remigio
- 5:00 Closing Ceremony

Hosted by Gerry Magnaye of AdFarm

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Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS ◉ TUESDAY FITNESS ◉ WEDNESDAY 2BU ◉ THURSDAY FOOD ◉ FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

The lighter side of fitness

Here's a list of excuses you can give for not working out

Part Two

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

LAUGHTER IS GOOD medicine. This old saying is now validated by scientific studies.

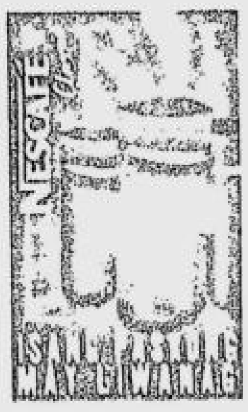
Researchers Patrick and Gael Crystal Flanagan write, "Laughter is a form of internal jogging that exercises the body and stimulates the release of beneficial brain neurotransmitters and hormones."

Psychiatrist Robert Holden adds, "Smiling and laughing produce happy chemicals called endorphins which work in the brain to give an overall feeling of well-being." Exercise does the same thing. If you haven't had time to keep fit this holiday season, here is the lighter side of fitness for a laughing workout.

Exercise excuses

- I don't exercise at all. If God wanted me to touch my toes, He would have put them up higher on my body.
- I'm in shape. Round is a shape.
- Did you ever see the customers in a health food store? They are pale, skinny people who look half-dead. In a steak house you see robust, ruddy people. They're dying, of course, but they look terrific.
- I gave up jogging when my thighs kept rubbing together setting my pantyhose on fire.
- I drive way too fast to worry about cholesterol.
- Every time I get the urge to exercise, I lie down till the feeling passes.
- "At my gym, they have free weights, so I took them."—Steve Smith
- The only exercise I get is jumping to conclusions.
- My gym trainer told me to touch my toes. I said, "I don't have that kind of relationship with my feet. Can I just wave?"
- I'm not into working out. My philosophy is no pain, no pain.
- I get my exercise running to the

THE LIGHTER/ C3



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DECEMBER 2, FRIDAY
Italian Caprice
UST Wind Orchestra
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

Passage, Streetscape, 9:30pm

DECEMBER 3, SATURDAY
Voices from the 5th
Trumpets Musicademy
The 5th, 3:00pm

Masks and Music
Manila Chamber Singers
Level 4, Art Plaza, 4:00pm

Christmas with You
La Salle Pops Orchestra
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

First Circle, Streetscape, 9:30pm

DECEMBER 4, SUNDAY
Voices from the 5th
Trumpets Musicademy
The 5th, 3:00pm

Noel at the Shang
Featuring Noel Cabangon
Grand Atrium, 4:00pm

DECEMBER 9, FRIDAY
In Christmas CompanY
The CompanY
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

8 Track, Streetscape, 9:30pm

DECEMBER 10, SATURDAY
Italian Serenade
Montserrat Male Choir
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

U Turn, Streetscape, 9:30pm

DECEMBER 11, SUNDAY
Voices from the 5th
Trumpets Musicademy
Grand Atrium, 4:00pm

DECEMBER 16, FRIDAY
Serenata
Meralco Chorale
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

Jay Cayuca with the Utopian Soundscape Orkestra
Streetscape, 9:30pm

DECEMBER 17, SATURDAY
Angelic
The Philippine Children's Choir from Mandaluyong
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

DJ Boyet Almazan, Streetscape, 9:30pm

DECEMBER 18, SUNDAY
'Tis the Season to Dance
Effie Nañas Dancenter
Grand Atrium, 6:00pm

DECEMBER 19, MONDAY
In Laude
UP Singing Ambassadors
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

DECEMBER 20, TUESDAY
Voci Giovani Cantano
Ateneo High School Glee Club
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

DECEMBER 21, WEDNESDAY
Un Bel Natale
University of the East Chorale
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

DECEMBER 22, THURSDAY
Christmas with Jay C
Featuring Jay Cayuca
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

DECEMBER 23, FRIDAY
Tales of Christmas
Alitaptap Storytellers' Club
Art Plaza, 4:00pm

The San Miguel Christmas Music Festival
San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

The Authority, Streetscape, 9:30pm

DECEMBER 24, SATURDAY
Il Prete Rosso
Kithara Quartet
Grand Atrium, 5:00pm

DECEMBER 26, MONDAY
Gloria in Excelsis Deo!
Novo Concertante
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

DECEMBER 27, TUESDAY
Flute and Guitar, plus Soprano
Sonny Yangco, Lester Demetillo and Alexis Edralin
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

DECEMBER 28, WEDNESDAY
Canticorum Jubilo
Chorus Paulinus
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

DECEMBER 29, THURSDAY
Vivaldi and More!
Global Brass Quintet
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

DECEMBER 30, FRIDAY
La Dolce Vita
Ateneo Chamber Singers
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

Toy Symphony with Ella Mae Saison
Streetscape, 9:30pm

DECEMBER 31, SATURDAY
Going Baroque
Philmusica Woodwind Quintet
Grand Atrium, 5:00pm

JANUARY 6, FRIDAY
Serenata
Meralco Chorale
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

Silk, Streetscape, 9:30pm

JANUARY 7, SATURDAY
Guitar Frolic
Kasilag Guitar Quartet
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

RJ & Friends, Streetscape, 9:30pm

JANUARY 8, SUNDAY
Carnival of Venice
GC4 Brass Choir
Grand Atrium, 7:00pm

Shangri-La Plaza

Turning 10 in Beijing

DO YOU KNOW THE THRILL *MOI* felt jetting in to Beijing, China, to interview the top designer of Salvatore Ferragamo's men's line and to witness, with 1,000 other hotshot invitees, the brand's gorgeous Spring/Summer 2006 Collection? A grand fashion extravaganza marked its 10th anniversary in Beijing. It was, and probably would be, the only event held at the exotic Forbidden City, *palanggas*.

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** using **Kodak** EasyShare system

Our small group consisted of Rustan heiress and Stores Specialists' dedicated woman of substance, **Zenaida "Nedy" Tantoco**, her constant escort, businessman **Patrick Jacinto**; ABS' mega asset GM, **Thelma San Juan**; Visions & Expressions Inc.'s **Ginggay Joven de la Merced**, heir to her mother's throne; yours truly (as in **Maurice**); and top photographer **Alex Van Hagen**, who took photos of those fabulous clothes.

We first went to the Centre Hotel where the Ferragamo clan stayed—chief executive officer, dashing **Ferrucio Ferragamo**; his sister, vivacious, classy and stylish vice president, **Giovanna Gentile Ferragamo**; another sister, head of accessories, **Fulvia Visconti Ferragamo**; head of women's leather goods, tall, handsome **James Ferragamo**, who was in Manille not too long ago, *palanggas*; and regional marketing director, cybersmart and so much fun **Cecilia Wong**.

After the cocktails and introductions, we had dinner at the *tres* exclusive members-only, excellent Beijing Club with Mr. Charmer himself, tall, witty **Raymond Malherbe**, brilliant managing director for Asia.

During dinner, we met the rest of the rah! rah! team of Ferragamo, all based in Hong Kong and working under Monsieur **R. Malherbe**.

Before the second course, we were joined by that young genius designer of the women's ready-to-wear line, fun **Graeme Black**, who was in a bright-red jacket and faded jeans. He told us many interesting things about his past and present, and what he hoped to do in the future.

After lunch the next day, it was interview time with the whole Ferragamo clan. I had the honor of interviewing **Massimilliano Giornetti**, who is in charge of the men's ready-to-wear line.

Then at 8 sharp, we entered the fabulously decorated Forbidden City. Torches and candles led to a huge red carpet and the great entrance to the city.

Tons of paparazzi were on one side as VIPs from the business and social world paraded in, rubbing elbows with Hong Kong's and China's chic-est and stylish movie stars, including **Tony Leung** and stunning **Karen Mok**, socialites and namedroppables in cashmere coats, knee-high boots, furs and dazzling long gowns.

As cocktails and finger food were served, a humongous screen showed black-and-white clips of past fashion shows and movies of Salvatore F.'s clothes and shoes worn by gorgeous movie stars.

Moi never knew that the sultry **Marilyn Monroe**, in that famous scene where her white skirt was billowing almost covering her face, was wearing Ferragamo shoes. **Audrey Hepburn**, in and out of the camera, was a loyal Ferragamo client.

Women played on traditional Chinese percussion instruments as the black curtains parted to reveal the fashion show area. A long, white, narrow ramp, with a white backdrop, put to best advantage the modern look of Salvatore Ferragamo.

The men's super collection, inspired by the '40s cinema, had lots of color, with fun accessories on many informal jackets; and combination of tailored suits, with Bermuda shorts, made it seem like spring and summer on that chilly night.

Après the show, the guests gave a standing ovation to this truly, wonderful one-of-a-kind presentation. The party continued, champagne flowed, and everyone toasted Salvatore Ferragamo's next 10 years in China, *palanggas*!

Next day we visited the Great Wall and, after a quick late late lunch, the incredible jade factory and store.

The following day we were off, spending a couple of hours in Hong Kong, then home on ever-reliable Cathay Pacific.

Here in the Philippines, Salvatore Ferragamo is definitely here to stay at Rustan's, its exclusive distributor.

Bold and good-looking

He is young, stylish and bold. **Massimilliano Giornetti** is lead designer for the men's line of the House of Salvatore Ferragamo. The former knitwear designer has been with the company for five years.

Based in Florence, this super charming Italian has the makings of a fashion hotshot—he has the boyish good looks and exceptional talent.

His men's collection for Spring/Summer 2006 is relaxed and casual, inspired by the movies of the 1940s. But he emphasized "it is more for the elegant and sophisticated male."

He said, "The Salvatore Ferragamo man is a man of stature. But he is also very confident and relaxed. He is traditional, yes; but he is modern as well."

Giornetti uses more color and texture. He said, "Fashion is always changing and progressing." Incorporating the signature of Salvatore Ferragamo, he modernizes the look to match the present. He has colorful jackets in blue, orange and green accented with pins and charms.

Giornetti uses stingray skin as material, and is not afraid to use print to make the look exciting. "Women are known to use accessories to accentuate their outfits. For men, this is not done as much. So infusing accessories is sort of like a provocation," he explained with his teasing, so Italian smile.

"The look is sporty and fresh. The shoes, hats, scarves and eyewear are suitable casual accents... I can rightfully say the male collection defines fun for the confident man."

And believe me, dahlings, Massimilliano Giornetti delivers. We definitely look forward to what this great talent will come up in the years to come.

ROYALS: Stores Specialists Inc. president Zenaida Tantoco; Salvatore Ferragamo vice president Giovanna Gentile Ferragamo; Salvatore's son and company president, Ferrucio Ferragamo; and Salvatore's daughter and head of accessories, Fulvia Visconti Ferragamo

YOUNG, talented Ferragamo women's line designer Graeme Black with models

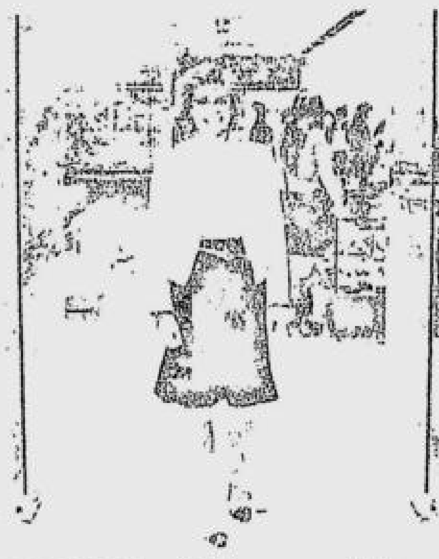
CELEBRATING Ferragamo's 10 years in China: Salvatore Ferragamo assistant managing director Elaine Ho, Metro Society editor in chief Thelma San Juan, Nedy Tantoco, *moi* and Ginggay de la Merced

HONG Kong chic: François Deleage, president of Louis Vuitton Asia Pacific, with Shirley Hiranand, Mabel Au Yeung, Christophe D'Orey, Anne Song and Franz Kraatz

THE COCKTAIL area for the grand Salvatore Ferragamo fashion show in the Forbidden City

WOMEN'S wear and accessories designer Massimilliano Giornetti

POSING for posterity after an exquisite dinner at the très chic and exclusive Beijing Club



GIOVANNA Gentile Ferragamo at the entrance of the Ferragamo store in Beijing

BOLD, hip look of Salvatore F. for summer by Massimilliano Giornetti

MEDICard, The Healthcare I Deserve!

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What is emergency management for firecracker injury?

Emergency treatment of firecracker related injuries generally include wound cleaning, antibiotic and tetanus vaccination. - Burns are the most common type of injury. Often, the hands are injured which may range from simple burns, lacerated/avulsed wounds to amputation of the fingers. At home, the wound should be washed with mild soap and water. At the hospital, the wound is again cleaned thoroughly coupled with possible surgical management(i.e. debridement) Topical burn cream may be applied to the wound. Appropriate antibiotic and tetanus vaccination are also given. Other firework related injuries can involve the eyes, ears and lungs. Initially, eye injuries should be irrigated well with tap water. The patient is then brought to the hospital as soon as possible. For superficial injuries, the eye is again washed with normal saline solution for 15 minutes, antibiotic eyedrops instilled and eye patch applied. For superficial and penetrating injuries to the eye, referral to an ophthalmologist is necessary. For ear injuries, the outer ear should be cleaned with cotton buds. Referral to a specialist is also needed for further evaluation of the extent of injury such as ear drum perforation, hearing loss and bleeding inside the ear., Another unique form of firecracker related injury in the Philippines is watusi (dancing firecracker) which aside from burn injury can cause poisoning if taken orally. For toxic ingestion, do not induce vomiting. Give 6-8 egg whites for children or 8-12 egg whites for adults. For skin exposure, wash wound with an alkaline soap (example: Ivory or Perla) and water. Again, bring the patient to a hospital for further treatment

This week's answer to our feature question was provided by our eight-year medical service provider/Medical Coordinator at Yap's Clinic in General Santos City, Dr. Daniel G. Yap. Dr. Yap is specializes in General Surgery and earned his medical degree at the University of Sto. Tomas. He took his residency training for General Surgery at the University of Sto. Tomas Hospital in 1996. He is a fellow of the Philippine College of Surgeons, Philippine Society of General Surgeons and a member of the Philippine College of Occupational Medicine. He is married to Dra. Lucy Ann Yap and blessed with 3 kids. MEDICard members may visit him at Yap's Clinic Mondays thru Saturdays from 10am-12noon and 2pm-4pm

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for your inquiries on health matters.

Nicky

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A different Christmas story

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, ARE you prepared to think the unthinkable regarding the origins of Christian teachings that have been kept secret for 2,000 years? What you are about to read will either shock or liberate you.

I often wonder about the real origin of Christian teachings. We've been told they originated from Jesus Christ, acknowledged founder of the Christian religion. But where did Jesus get his ideas? Since he was not a Christian but a Jew, where did he learn all those seemingly new religious concepts?

Authors Tim Freke and Peter Gandy, in their thought-provoking book "The Jesus Mysteries," said early Christian concepts came from Paganism. Christians merely adopted them without acknowledging their origin.

The authors claimed Christian teachings antedated the birth of Christ, the story of a dying and resurrecting god of ancient origin.

They found that, before the birth of Christ, Pagans worshipped a god-man miraculously born on Dec. 25 before three shepherds. They considered him a redeemer who ascended to heaven, promising to come again to judge the living and the dead.

This god-man declared that "he who will not eat my body and drink of my blood will not know salvation." These teachings sound very much like Christ's!

Why have we not heard of this before? The authors said "the Roman Church brutally crushed the ancient Pagan religion throughout the Roman Empire. Marvelous temples were reduced to rubble. Priests and philosophers were put to death. Vast libraries of spiritual wisdom and scientific knowledge were consigned to the bonfires."

The mystical philosophy of the Pagans that emphasized personal knowledge of God was suppressed, replaced by a religion based on blind faith in the word of the bishops. Those who disagreed or opposed were persecuted, tortured and killed.

In the Middle Ages, the persecution reached its peak with the Holy Inquisition. Hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children were burned at the stakes, including Joan of Arc.

What were the shocking similarities authors Freke and Gandy discovered between Christianity and ancient Pagan religions? At the heart of the secret teachings of ancient Paganism were myths concerning a dying and resurrecting god-man, known by different names. In Egypt he was Osiris, in Greece Dionysus, in Asia Minor Attis, in Syria Adonis, in Italy Bacchus, in Persia Mithras. The different names refer to the same mythical being. The story of the Christ is simply a retelling of ancient teachings, the authors said.

The more they studied versions of the god-man story in different ancient cultures, the more it became obvious the story of Jesus had the characteristics of the perennial story. They constructed the supposed biography of Jesus from the mythic motifs relating to Osiris-Dionysus-Attis-Adonis-Bacchus-Mithras.

1. Osiris is god who became man.
2. His father is god and his mother a virgin mortal.
3. He is born in a cave or cow-shed on Dec. 25 before three shepherds.
4. He offers followers the chance to be reborn through baptism.
5. He miraculously turns water into wine at a marriage ceremony.
6. He rides triumphantly into town on a donkey as people wave palm leaves to honor him.
7. He dies at Easter time for the sins of the world.
8. He descends into hell then rises on the third day and ascends to heaven.
9. His followers await his return as judge during the last days.
10. His death and resurrection are celebrated by a ritual meal of bread and wine symbolizing his body and blood.

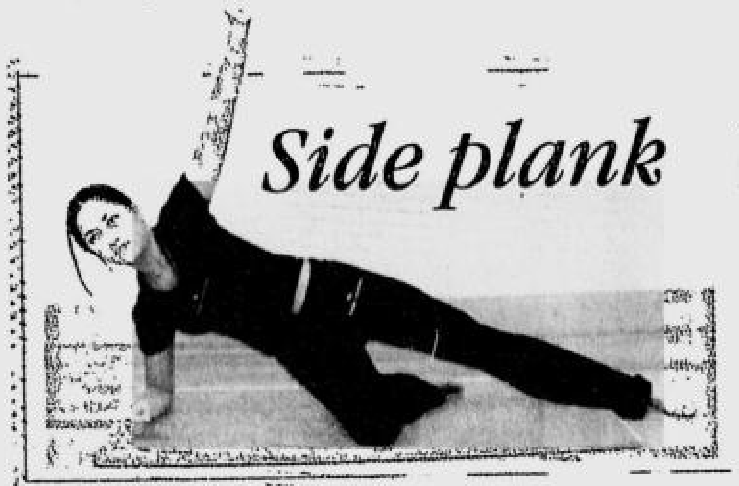
"Although surprising to us today," according to Freke and Gandy, "to writers of the first centuries AD, these similarities were extremely obvious." Pagans, like the philosopher Celsus, complained that Christianity was just a pale reflection of pagan mysteries.

"Early church fathers, such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian and Ireneus, did not deny such similarities, but resorted to the desperate claim that they were the results of diabolical mimicry! Using one of the most absurd arguments ever advanced, they accused the Devil of deviously copying the true story of Jesus before it had actually happened."

All this, however, need not detract from the essential message of Christ's birth: that we, like him, can become god and be one with him forever in heaven.

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Side plank



THIS YOGA-INSPIRED EXERCISE strengthens all the muscles of the torso - the abdominals as well as the lower back.

Equipment

Exercise mat

Exercise technique

1. Lie sideways with your elbow directly under your shoulder joint. Your bottom leg should be bent and your top leg straight.

2. Push your body upwards so your full body weight is balanced between your elbow, knee and foot. Raise your free arm straight to the ceiling.

3. Hold this position for eight to 15 seconds as you continue to breathe evenly.

4. Slowly lower yourself and switch sides.

Performance tips

1. As you become stronger, straighten both legs in a scissors-position with the ankles crossed.

2. Make sure to hold your head in line with your neck and spine.

3. Do not hold your breath.

4. Hold the position for four seconds and progressively increase the length of time as you get stronger.

5. For beginners, do only step one of the exercise technique described above. Just holding your torso in this starting position is enough of a challenge. Keep your free arm on your hip.

Repetitions

Do one to two sets per side.

The lighter side of fitness

From page C1

funerals of my friends who exercise. —Barry Gray

- If God wanted us to run, instead of a belly button, He'd have given us a fast-forward button.
- I used to run five miles every day. Then I decided to move closer to the bus stop.
- The physical-fitness craze doesn't make sense. The guy who exercises every day and the person who never exercises end up with the same thing—a body to last a lifetime.

Safety tips

- Before beginning any exercise program, check with your doctor—to make sure your heart can take the shock of the price of exercise equipment.
- The first time you try cross-country skiing, try a small country.
- Exercises like pushups and chin-ups can be dangerous because they elevate the blood pressure significantly. The best indication it's time to rest is a heart attack.
- Wearing a sweat suit while exercising in warm weather will jeopardize your health. It is a good idea, however, to wear something.
- Using an exercise bicycle in your house gives your cardiovascular system the same workout as jogging outdoors, plus an added advantage: you can have the heart attack in the privacy of your home.

Weight loss

- The older you get, the tougher it is to lose weight because, by then, your body and your fat are really good friends.
- One of life's mysteries is how a two-pound box of candy can make a woman gain five pounds.
- Inside me there's a thin person struggling to get out, but I can usually sedate her with four or five cupcakes.
- The toughest part of a diet isn't watching what you eat. It's watching what other people eat.
- Diets are for women who not only kept their girlish figure but also doubled it.
- I told my doctor I get very tired when I go on a diet, so he gave me pep pills. Know what happened? I ate faster. —Joe Lewis
- The Garlic Diet: You don't lose weight; you just look thinner from a distance.
- Amazing! You hang something in your closet for a while and it shrinks two sizes!
- A great way to lose weight is to eat while naked and stand in front of a mirror. Restaurants will almost always throw you out before you can eat too much.
- Everything I like is either illegal, immoral or fattening. —Alexander Woollcott
- Part of the secret of success in life is to eat what you like and let the food fight it out inside. —Mark Twain
- The biggest seller is cookbooks and the second is diet books—how not to eat what you've just learned how to cook. —Andy Rooney
- The best way to lose weight is to close your mouth—something very difficult for a politician. Or watch your food—just watch it, don't eat it. —Edward I. Koch

Bathroom scale diet tricks

- Weigh yourself fully clothed after dinner and the next morning without clothes and before breakfast. It's nice to see how much weight you lost overnight.
- Never weigh yourself with wet hair.
- When weighing, remove everything, including eyeglasses. Blurred vision is an asset. Remove jewelry, as it could weigh as much as a pound.
- Buy only cheap scales, never the medical kind. Accuracy is the enemy and high quality scales are very accurate.
- Always go to the bathroom first.
- Weigh yourself after a haircut; this is good for up to half a pound (hopefully).
- Exhale with all your might before weighing. (Air has weight, right?)
- Put just one foot on the scale then, holding onto a towel rod, edge your other foot onto the scale while slowly releasing the towel rod. This takes time, but worth it. You will weigh at least two pounds less than normal.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info.

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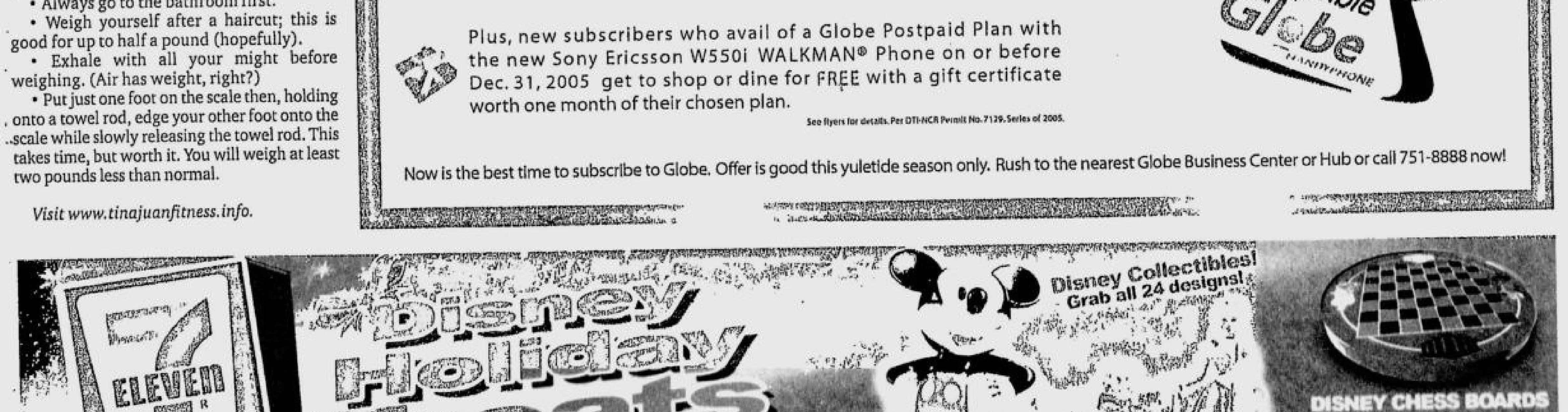

7-ELEVEN

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—Rig Veda

SO, YOU ARE A YEAR OLDER. THIS only brings you closer to self-empowerment or self-realization. How? It begins with…

Transformation

The human body is a conglomeration of information, a wondrous combination of messages.

For example: If you bite into a lemon, the juice stimulates the secretion of enzymes to begin digestion of the fruit sugar before it moves to the stomach where gastric juices will do the work. Food in the mouth automatically triggers digestion.

Now, visualize the lemon in your mouth or say the word. Watch what happens. Again your mouth releases salivary enzymes. The message is more important than the food. Words, thoughts and images can be just as powerful and just as real, influencing a simple process within us.

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

Message = Reality

While the message may not be the actual thing, it can turn into that thing we are thinking. If saliva cannot digest words, the mind digests messages.

The formation of reality and its possibilities is possible to all minds that remain open, creative, optimistic, expansive. If the message is "I love you," your heart begins to beat faster and a metamorphosis takes place.

The emotion in your mind releases feel-good hormones and adrenaline rushes into your blood stream. You are flooded with warmth and vibrance, stresses vanish for one magical moment.

The mind-body connection is so strong that the word love can trigger such positive responses. It is a mystery that transcends biology, chemistry, physics and medicine. But it exists and it is real. If messages can be powerful medicine, what language do we use to talk to ourselves?

Language for the self

Child psychologists have found that kids respond strongly to ascriptive messages like "you are a good/bad boy" or "you're not as intelligent as your sister" rather than prescriptive "brush your teeth after meal," "say your prayers before sleeping." In short, telling a child what he/she is, is more important than telling a child what he/she should do.

Words can inflict wounds or create a new reality.

Old and young in you

How do you talk to the child in you? In all of us, there is a child looking for encouragement, appreciation, recognition, understanding. This child never grows old.

In a situation calling for action, you may have two responses, according to Deepak Chopra, MD. Example: "I am too tired to do that" or "I am too old to do that." The first says there is hope for change, for energy to be restored. The latter says it's not possible.

The general notion is old and young are opposites. Old is useless, young is useful; old is lifeless, young is life; old is yesterday, young is today.

Youth in your message

The challenge is to remove the negative connotation of old and absorb young as part of the consciousness.

Homework: Beginning today, feed yourself life—nourishing, spirit-uplifting, energy-raising messages. Have no room for destructive messages. Transformation can and will begin, your body responding in dramatic ways, including an increase in hormones to keep you young.

There is not a single youth pill but there is one secret—the more "live" foods you eat, the more energized you are.

Eat raw food before every meal—salad or fruit plus vegetable juice at breakfast. This leads to great and pleasant changes.

Youth splash

Your skin can benefit from an apple cider vinegar soak. Put 1 tbsp vinegar into a bowl of cool water or 1 cup into a bath tub. It cleanses and softens the skin.

Affirmation

"I am forever young."

Love and light!

Reference: "Ageless Body, Timeless Mind," by Deepak Chopra, MD

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